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THE

HISTORY

OF

Our Bleſſed LORD and SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST.

WITH

The Lives of his APOSTLES and EVANGELISTS,

AND OTHER

EMINENT PERSONS and MARTYRS,

Who firſt propagated the

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CONTAINING,

The Whole Doctrine of CHRISTIANITY, the Evidences on which it is founded, and the Manner of its Eſtabliſhment in different Parts of the World.

TOGETHER WITH

Satisfactory Anſwers to the Objections made againſt our Holy Religion by the JEW, the GENTILE, and the DEIST, or FREE-THINKER of the preſent Age.

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INTRODUCTORY DISSERTATION,

IN WHICH

The Evidences for CHRISTIANITY are fairly ſtated, the NEW TESTAMENT proved to be genuine, and the RELIGION of JESUS truly Divine.

PERHAPS no Nation or Age has exceeded our own, in clearly ſtating the Nature of moral Virtue, inforcing the Practice of it by the Views of its native Beauty, and beneficial Conſequences, both to private Perſons and Societies. And yet I fear I may add, that there have been few Ages or Countries where Vice has more generally triumphed, in its moſt audacious, and, in other Reſpects, moſt odious Forms.

What Cauſe, it is therefore reaſonable to aſk, can produce ſo ſtrange a Circumſtance? Doubtleſs from that unhappy diſregard, either to the Goſpel in General, or to its peculiar and eſſential Truths, ſo viſible in the World, and which appears to be continually increaſing. It is too evident that Multitudes among us, like thoſe of old, who thought and profeſſed themſelves the wiſeſt of Mankind, or in other Words, the freeſt Thinkers of the Age, have been deſirous of baniſhing God and his Truths from their Knowledge: and it is therefore the leſs to be wondered at, if God has given them up to a reprobate Mind; to the moſt infamous Luſts and Enormities; and to a depth of Degeneracy, which, while it is in part the natural Conſequence, is in part alſo the juſt, but dreadful Puniſhment of their Apoſtacy from the Faith. And I am perſuaded that thoſe who wiſh well to the Cauſe of public Virtue, as every true Chriſtian moſt certainly does, cannot ſerve it more effectually, than by endeavouring to eſtabliſh Men in the Belief of the Goſpel in general, and to effect their Minds with its moſt diſtinguiſhing Truths. The latter I flatter myſelf I have ſufficiently done in the following Lives of the bleſſed Jeſus and his Apoſtles and Followers, and propoſe in this Diſſertation to prove that the Chriſtian Religion is true, and owes its origin to God himſelf.

It will be needleſs to obſerve, that this is a Matter of the higheſt Importance, as every one will apprehend that it is the Foundation of all our Hopes. It is abſolutely neceſſary, in this Age of Libertiniſm, that every Chriſtian ſhould be able to give a Reaſon

ſon for the hope that is in him, and to put to Silence the Tongues of thoſe Men who have evil will at Sion. And may the Almighty enable me to plead his Cauſe with Succeſs. May the divine Spirit accompany theſe Arguments, that the Faith of my Readers being more and more eſtabliſhed, it may appear that the Tree is watered at the Roots by all the other Graces growing and flouriſhing in an equal Proportion.

God has made ample Proviſion for the Honour and Support of his Goſpel, by furniſhing it with a variety of Proofs, which may, with undiminiſhed, and indeed with growing Conviction, be diſplayed in the Eyes of the whole World. And we ſhould be greatly wanting in Gratitude to him, in Zeal for a Redeemer's Kingdom, and in charitable Concern for the Converſion of thoſe who reject the Goſpel, as well as for the Edification of thoſe who embrace it, ſhould we wholly overlook thoſe Arguments, or neglect to acquaint ourſelves with them. This is the Evidence I am going to propoſe, and I beg my Reader would peruſe it with becoming Attention. I write to you as a rational Creature: judge therefore of the Reaſonableneſs of what I am going to offer.

In Proſecution of this great Deſign, I ſhall endeavour more particularly to ſhew, that if we take the Matter on a general Survey, it will appear highly probable, that ſuch a Scheme of Doctrines and Precepts, as we find Chriſtianity to be, ſhould indeed have been a divine Revelation: and then, that if we examine into the external Evidence of it, we ſhall find it certain in Fact, that it was ſo, and that it had its origin from on high.

Firſt then, I am to ſhew, that taking the Matter merely in Theory, it will appear highly probable, that ſuch a Syſtem as the Goſpel ſhould be indeed a divine Revelation.

To prove this, I will firſt ſhew,---That the State of Mankind was ſuch, as greatly to need a Revelation;---That there ſeems from the light of Nature, encouragement to hope, that God would grant one;---That it is reaſonable to believe that if any were made, it ſhould be introduced and tranſmitted, as we are told Chriſtianity was; and that its general Nature and Subſtance ſhould be ſuch, as we find that of the Goſpel is. If I can ſatisfactorily prove theſe Particulars, there will be a ſtrong preſumptive Evidence that the Goſpel is from God, and a fair Way will be opened for that more divine Proof, which I principally intend.

1. The Caſe of Mankind is naturally ſuch, as to need a divine Revelation.

I would not be underſtood to ſpeak here of Man in his original State; though even then ſome Inſtruction from above ſeemed neceſſary to inform him of many Particulars, which it was highly proper for him then to know: but I ſpeak of him in the degenerate Condition he now ſo evidently lies, by whatever Means he fell into it. It is very eaſy to make florid Encomiums on the perfection of natural light, and to deceive unwary readers by an ambiguous Term, as Dr. Tindal

Tindal has done in his Chriſtianity as old as the Creation; a fallacy beneath an ingenuous Reaſoner, and which alone ought to have expoſed his Book to the Contempt of every intelligent reader. Truth needs no diſguiſe; a candid Advocate ſcorns ſuch Subterfuges; let fact ſpeak, and the Controverſy will ſoon be decided. I appeal to every intelligent Reader who is acquainted with the Records of Antiquity, or that has any Knowledge of the preſent State of thoſe Countries where Chriſtianity is unknown, whether it is not too obvious a Truth, that the whole Heathen World has lain and ſtill lies in a State of Wickedneſs. Have not the greater part of them been perpetually bewildered in their religious Notions and Practices, vaſtly different from each other, and almoſt equally differing on all Sides from the Appearances of Truth and Reaſon? Is any thing ſo wild as not to have been believed; any thing ſo infamous as not to have been practiſed by them, while they not only pretended to juſtify it by Reaſon, but to have conſecrated it as part of their Religion? To this very Day, what are the Diſcoveries of new Nations in the American or African World, but, generally ſpeaking, the opening of new Scenes of Enormity? Rapine, Luſt, Cruelty, human Sacrifices, and the moſt ſtupid Idolatries, are, and, for ought I can find, always have been, the Morality and Religion of almoſt all the Pagan Nations under Heaven; and to ſay that there have been ſome ſmothered Sparks of Reaſon within, which, if cheriſhed, might have led them to Truth and Happineſs, is only ſaying that they have been ſo much the more Criminal, and therefore ſo much the more Miſerable.

But perhaps ſome of my Readers have only heard thoſe Things by uncertain Report. If this be the Caſe, look around you within the Sphere of your own Obſervation, and remark the Temper and Character of the generality of thoſe who have been educated in a Chriſtian, and even in a Proteſtant Country. Obſerve their Ignorance and Forgetfulneſs of the Divine Being, their Impieties, their Debaucheries, their Fraud, their Oppreſſion, their Pride, their Avarice, their Ambition, their unnatural ſenſibility of the Wants and Sorrows and Intereſts of each other; and when you ſee how bad they generally are in the midſt of ſo many Advantages, judge by that of the probable State of thoſe that want them. When the candid Reader has well weighed theſe Particulars, let him judge whether a Revelation be an unneceſſary thing.

2 There is, from the light of Nature, conſiderable Encouragement to hope that God would favour his Creatures with ſo deſirable a thing as a Revelation appears to be.

That a Revelation is in itſelf a poſſible Thing is evident beyond all ſhadow of doubt. Shall not he that made Man's Mouth, who has given us this wonderful Faculty of diſcovering our Sentiments, and communicating our Ideas to each other; ſhall not he be able to converſe with his rational Creatures, and by ſenſible Manifeſtations,

or by inward Impreſſions, convey the knowledge of Things, which lie beyond the ken of their natural Faculties, and yet may be highly conducive to their Advantage? To own a God, and to deny him ſuch a Power, would be a notorious Contradiction——But it may appear much more dubious, whether he will pleaſe to confer ſuch a Favour on ſinful Creatures.

Now I acknowledge that we could not certainly conclude he would ever do it; conſidering on the one Hand, how juſtly they ſtood expoſed to his final Diſpleaſure; and on the other, what Proviſion he had made by the Frame of the human Mind, and of Nature around us, for giving us ſuch Notices of himſelf, as would leave us inexcuſable, if we either failed to know him, or to glorify him as God, as the Apoſtle argues at large (Rom. i. 20, &c.) Nevertheleſs, we ſhould, methinks, have ſomething of this kind to hope, from conſidering God as the indulgent Father of his Creatures; from obſerving the tender Care he takes of us, and the liberal ſupply which he grants for the ſupport of the animal Life; eſpecially from the Proviſion he has made for Man, conſidered as a guilty and calamitous Creature, by the medicinal and healing Virtues he has given to the Productions of Nature, which Man, in a perfect State of Rectitude and Happineſs, never would have needed. This is a Circumſtance which ſeemed ſtrongly to intimate, that he would ſome time or other graciouſly provide an adequate Remedy to heal the Minds of the Children of Men; and that he would interpoſe to inſtruct them, in his own Nature, in the Manner in which he is to be ſerved, and in the final Treatment which they may expect from him. And I think, ſuch an apprehenſion ſeems very congruous to the Sentiments of the generality of Mankind, as appears from the many Pretences to divine Revelation, which have ſo often been made, and the readineſs of Multitudes to receive them upon very ſlender Proofs; a ſufficient Proof that Men naturally expect ſome ſuch kind of Interpoſition of the Deity.

3. It is natural to conclude, that if a Revelation were given, it would be introduced and tranſmitted, in ſuch a Manner as the Evangeliſts tell us Chriſtianity was.

It is, for Inſtance, highly probable, that it ſhould be taught, either by ſome illuſtrious Perſon, ſent down from a ſuperior World, or at leaſt by a Man of eminent Wiſdom and Piety, who ſhould himſelf have been, not only a Teacher, but an Example of univerſal Goodneſs. In order to this, it ſeems probable, that he ſhould be led through a Series of Calamities and Diſtreſs; ſince otherwiſe he could not have been a Pattern of the Virtues which adorn Adverſity, and are peculiar to it. And it might alſo have been expected that in the extremity of his Diſtreſs, the Almighty, whoſe Meſſenger he was, ſhould, in ſome extraordinary Manner, have interpoſed, either to preſerve, or to recover him from Death.

It is moreover exceeding probable, that ſuch a Perſon, and perhaps alſo they

hey who were at firſt employed as his Meſſengers to the World, ſhould be endowed with a Power of working Miracles, both to awaken Men's Attention, and to prove his divine Miſſion, and the conſequent Truth of his Doctrines, ſome of which might perhaps be capable of no other Proof; or if they were, it is certain that no Method of arguing is ſo ſhort, ſo plain, and ſo forcible, and on the whole ſo well ſuited to Conviction, and probably the Reformation of Mankind, as a Courſe of evident, repeated, and uncontrouled Miracles. And ſuch a Method of Proof is eſpecially adapted to the Populace, who are incomparably the greater part of Mankind, and for whoſe Benefit we may aſſure ourſelves a Revelation would be chiefly deſigned. I might add, it was no way improbable, though not in itſelf certain, that a Diſpenſation ſhould open gradually to the World; and that the moſt illuſtrious Meſſenger of God to Men, ſhould be uſhered in by ſome Predictions which ſhould raiſe a great Expectation of his Appearance, and have an evident Accompliſhment in him.

As for the Propagation of a Religion ſo introduced, it ſeems no way improbable, that having been thus eſtabliſhed in its firſt Age, it ſhould be tranſmitted to future Generations by credible Teſtimony, as other important Facts are. It is certain, that Affairs of the utmoſt Moment, tranſacted among Men, depend on Teſtimony: on this Voyages are undertaken, Settlements made, and Controverſies decided; Controverſies on which not only the Eſtates but the Lives of Men depend. And though it muſt be owned, that ſuch an Hiſtorical Evidence is not equally convincing with Miracles which are wrought before our own Eyes; yet it is certain, it may riſe to ſuch a Degree as to exclude all reaſonable doubt. And I know not why we ſhould expect, that the Evidence of a Revelation ſhould be ſuch, as univerſally to compel the immediate Acquieſcence of all to whom it is offered. To me it appears much more probable, that it ſhould be ſo adjuſted, as to be a kind of Touchſtone to the Tempers and Characters of Men, capable indeed of giving ample Satisfaction to the diligent and candid Enquirer, yet attended with ſome Circumſtances, from whence the captious and perverſe might take occaſion to cavil and object. Such we might reaſonably ſuppoſe a Revelation would be, and ſuch it is maintained Chriſtianity is. The Teachers of it undertake to prove, that it was thus introduced, thus eſtabliſhed, and thus tranſmitted; and I truſt, that this is a ſtrong Preſumption in its Favour, eſpecially as we can add,

4. That the principal Doctrines contained in the Goſpel are of ſuch a Nature, as we might in general ſuppoſe thoſe of a divine Revelation would be, rational, practical, and ſublime.

It is natural to imagine, that in a Revelation of a Religion from God, the great Principles of natural Religion ſhould be clearly aſſerted, and ſtrongly maintained: Such, I mean, as the Exiſtence, the Unity, the Perfection, and the Providence of God; the eſſential and immutable Difference between moral Good and Evil; the Obligations

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we are under to the various Branches of Virtue, whether human, ſocial, or divine; the Value and Immortality of the Soul; and the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State. All theſe particulars every rational Perſon would conclude were contained in it; and that upon the whole it ſhould appear calculated to form Men's Minds to a proper Temper, rather than to amuſe them with curious Speculations.

It might indeed be farther ſuppoſed, that ſuch a Revelation would contain ſome Things which could not have been learnt from the higheſt Improvements of natural Light: And conſidering the infinite and unfathomable Nature of the Almighty, it would be more than probable, that many Things might be hinted at, and referred to, which our feeble Faculties could not be able fully to comprehend. Yet we ſhould expect to find theſe introduced with a practical View as directing us to Duties before unknown, or ſuggeſting powerful Motives to make us reſolute and conſtant in the Diſcharge of the reſt. We ſhould for Inſtance, expect to find on what Terms, and to what Degree, Pardon and Happineſs might be expected by ſinful Creatures.

The Reader's Thoughts have undoubtedly prevented me in the Application of theſe Characters to the Chriſtian Religion; and therefore it will be unneceſſary to juſtify that Application. In ſhort, the Chriſtian Syſtem is undoubtedly worthy of God; nor is it poſſible to imagine from whom elſe it could have proceeded *.

Thus have I conſidered the firſt Branch of the Argument, and ſhewn, I hope ſatisfactorily, that taking the Chriſtian Scheme only in Theory, it appears highly probable. The Truth is, that to embrace the Goſpel is ſo ſafe, and upon the whole ſo comfortable a Thing, that I think a wiſe Man would deliberately venture his all upon it, though nothing more could be offered for its Confirmation. But bleſſed be God, we have a great deal more to offer in this important Cauſe; and can add with ſtill greater Confidence, that it is not only probable in Theory, but

Secondly, That it is in Fact certain, that Chriſtianity is indeed a divine Revelation.

On this I confeſs the chief Streſs is to be laid; and therefore I ſhall inſiſt more largely on this Branch of the Argument, and endeavour, by the divine Aſſiſtance, to prove the Certainty of this great, this important Fact. And in order to this, it will be neceſſary to ſhew,

I. That the Books of the New Teſtament, now extant, may be depended upon as written by the firſt Preachers and Publiſhers of Chriſtianity. And

II. That from hence it will certainly follow, that what they aſſert is true, and that the Religion they teach, brings

* From what has been ſaid, it ſufficiently appears, that a Revelation was abſolutely neceſſary, to inſtruct Mankind in the moſt important Principles of Religion; and conſequently Lord Bolingbroke's Arguments, againſt the Neceſſity of an extraordinary Revelation, falls to the Ground, like a mighty Structure when the Foundation is deſtroyed.

brings with it ſuch Evidences of a divine Authority, as may juſtly recommend it to our Acceptance.

Each of theſe Heads would furniſh Matter for ſeveral Volumes; but as I am writing only a Diſſertation, it is my Buſineſs to hint at the moſt obvious and important Particulars, by which they may briefly be illuſtrated and confirmed.

I. I am to prove, that the Books of the New Teſtament, now extant, were written by the firſt Preachers and Publiſhers of Chriſtianity.

I ſhall now confine myſelf to the Books of the New Teſtament; not that I think the Authority of the Old to be ſuſpected, or the uſe of it by any Means to be deſpiſed. God forbid! It is an invaluable Treaſure which demands our daily pleaſing and grateful peruſal, and is capable of being defended in a Manner, which I am perſuaded its moſt ſubtle Enemies will never be able to anſwer. But the Nature of my preſent Argument, and the Limits to which this introductory Diſcourſe is confined, oblige me at preſent to wave the Proof of it; any farther than as it is implied in what I have more immediately in view.

After premiſing theſe Particulars, I ſhall go on to the Argument, and advance it by the following Degrees. I ſhall prove, that Chriſtianity is an ancient Religion;—That there was ſuch a Perſon as Jeſus of Nazareth crucified, above ſeventeen hundred Years ago at Jeruſalem;—That the firſt Preachers of his Religion wrote Books, which went by the Name of thoſe that now make up the Volume of the New Teſtament;—That they are preſerved in the Original to the preſent Time;—And that the Engliſh Tranſlation of them now publickly uſed, is in the main faithful, and may be depended upon.

1. It is certain, that Chriſtianity is not a new Religion, but that it was maintained by great Multitudes, ſoon after the Time in which the Goſpels tell us Jeſus appeared.

That there was, conſiderably more than ſixteen hundred Years ago, a Body of Men that went by the Name of Chriſtians, is almoſt as evident, as that a Race of Men was then ſubſiſting in the World; nor do I know that any Enemy to the Religion of Jeſus, has ever been vile and confident enough to diſpute it. Indeed there are ſuch Numbers both of Chriſtian and Heathen Writers who atteſt this Fact, that it would be madneſs to deny it, and therefore ſuperfluous for me to prove it. But I cannot help obſerving that Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, Marcus Antonius, and others, not only atteſt the Exiſtence of ſuch a Body of Men, but alſo inform us of the extreme Perſecutions they underwent, in the very infancy of their Religion; a ſtrong Evidence that they were firmly perſuaded, that their Religion was from on high.

2. That there was ſuch a Perſon as Jeſus of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jeruſalem, when Pontius Pilate was the Roman Governor there.

It can never be imagined, that Multitudes of People ſhould take their

Names from Chriſt, and ſacrifice their Lives for their Adherence to him, even in the ſame Age in which he is ſaid to have lived, if they had not been well aſſured, that there was ſuch a Perſon. Nay, Tacitus himſelf tells us, that he was put to Death under Pontius Pilate, who was Procurator of Judea in the Reign of Tiberius. And it is well known, that the Primitive Chriſtian Apologiſts often appeal to the Acts of Pilate, or the Memoirs of his Government, which he, according to the Cuſtom of all other Procurators, tranſmitted to Rome, as containing an Account of theſe Tranſactions: And as the Appeal was made to thoſe, who had the Command of the public Records, we may aſſure ourſelves ſuch Teſtimonies were then extant. But it is a Fact which our Enemies never denied. They owned it; they even gloried in it, and upbraided the Chriſtians with the infamous Death of him whom they called their Saviour. Thus it ſufficiently appears, that there was at the Time commonly ſuppoſed ſuch a Perſon as Chriſt, who profeſſed himſelf a divine Teacher, and who gathered many Diſciples, by whom his Religion was afterwards publiſhed in the World.

3. It is alſo certain, that the firſt Publiſhers of this Religion wrote Books, which contained an Account of the Life and Doctrine of Jeſus their Maſter, and which went by the Name of thoſe that now make up our New Teſtament.

It was in the Nature of Things highly probable that they would declare and publiſh to the World, in Writing, the Things they had ſeen and heard; conſidering how common Books were in the Age and Countries in which they taught; and of how great importance an Acquaintance with the Hiſtory and Doctrine of Chriſt was to the Purpoſes which they ſo ſtrenuouſly purſued; but we have much more than ſuch a preſumptive Evidence.

The moſt inveterate Adverſaries to Chriſtianity muſt grant, that we have Books of great Antiquity, written ſome fourteen, ſome fifteen, and ſome ſixteen hundred Years ago: In which mention is made of the Life of Chriſt, as written by many, and eſpecially by four of his Diſciples, who by way of Evidence are ſtiled Evangeliſts. Great Pains indeed have been taken to prove that ſome ſpurious Pieces were publiſhed under the Names of the Apoſtles, containing the Hiſtory of theſe Things. But ſurely this muſt imply, that it was a Thing known and allowed, that the Apoſtles did write ſome Narrations of this kind; as counterfeit Coin implies ſome true Money which it is deſigned to repreſent. And I am ſure he muſt be very little acquainted with the ancient Eccleſiaſtical Writers, who does not know, that the Primitive Chriſtians made a great Difference between thoſe Writings which we call the Canonical Books of the New Teſtament, and others: Which plainly ſhews, that they did not judge of Writings merely by the Names of their pretended Authors, but enquired with an Accuracy becoming the Importance of theſe Pretences. The Reſult

fult of this Enquiry was, that the four Goſpels, the Acts, thirteen Epiſtles of St. Paul, one of St. Peter, and one of St. John, were received upon ſuch Evidence, that Euſebius, a moſt accurate and early Critic in theſe Things, could not learn that they had ever been diſputed. And afterwards the remaining Books of the New Teſtament, namely, Hebrews, James, the ſecond of Peter, the ſecond and third of John, Jude, and the Revelations, were admitted as genuine, and added to the reſt. On the whole, it is ſufficiently plain, that the primitive Chriſtians were ſo thoroughly ſatisfied of the Authority of the ſacred Books, that they ſpeak of them, not only as credible and authentic, but as equal to the Oracles of the Old Teſtament, as divinely inſpired, as the Words of the Spirit, as the Law and Organ of God, and as the Rule of Faith, which cannot be contradicted without the greateſt Guilt; with many other Expreſſions of the ſame kind, which often occur in their Diſcourſes. To which I may add, that in ſome of their Councils, the New Teſtament was placed on a Throne, to ſignify their Deſire, that all their Controverſies might be determined, and their Actions regulated by it.

From the whole, therefore, it is plain, that the primitive Church did receive certain Pieces, which bore the ſame Titles with the Books of our New Teſtament. Now I think it is evident, that they were as capable of judging whether a Book was written by Matthew, John or Paul as the ancient Romans could be of determining whether Horace Tully, or Livy, wrote thoſe which go under their Names. And I am ſure the Intereſt of the former was much more concerned in the Writings of the Apoſtles, than that of the latter in the Compoſitions of their Poets, Orators, or even their Hiſtorians, and there is Reaſon to believe, they would take much greater care to inform themſelves fully in the Merits of the Cauſe, and to avoid being impoſed upon by Artifice and Fiction. Let me now proceed to ſhew,

4. That the Books of the New Teſtament have been preſerved in the main uncorrupted, to the preſent Time, in the original Language in which they were written.

This is a Matter of the laſt Importance; and, bleſſed be God, we have a proportional Evidence; an Evidence, in which the Hand of Providence has indeed been remarkably ſeen; for I am confident, that there is no other ancient Book in the World, which may ſo certainly and ſo eaſily be proved to be authentic.

And here, I will not argue merely from the Piety of the primitive Chriſtians, and the heroic Actions and Reſolutions with which they choſe to endure the greateſt Extremities, rather than deliver up their Bibles, tho' that Conſideration is evidently of the greateſt Weight; but ſhall intreat my Readers to conſider the utter impoſſibility of corrupting them. From the firſt Ages they were received and read in the Churches, as a part of their public Worſhip, juſt as Moſes and the Prophets were in the Jewiſh Synagogues;

they were preſently ſpread far and near, as the Boundaries of the Church were increaſed; they were early tranſlated into other Languages, of which Tranſlations ſome remain to this very Day. Now when this was the Caſe, how could they poſſibly be adulterated? Is it a Thing to be ſuppoſed, or imagined, that thouſands and millions of People ſhould have come together from diſtant Countries; and that, with all their diverſities of Language and Cuſtoms, and, I may add, of Sentiments too, they ſhould have agreed on corrupting a Book which they all acknowledged to be the Rule of their Faith, and their Manners, and the great Charter by which they held their eternal Hopes! It were madneſs to believe it, eſpecially when we conſider what Numbers of Heretics appeared in the very Infancy of the Church, who all pretended to build their Notions on Scripture, and moſt of them appealed to it as the final judge of Controverſies. Now it is certain that theſe different Sects of Chriſtians were a perpetual Guard upon one another, and rendered it impoſſible for one party to practiſe thus groſly on the ſacred Books, without the Diſcovery and Clamour of the reſt.

Nor muſt I omit to obſerve, that in every Age, from the Apoſtle's Time to our own, there have been numberleſs Quotations made from the Books of the New Teſtament; and a Multitude of Commentators in various Languages and ſome of very ancient Date, have been written upon them; ſo that if the Books themſelves were loſt, I believe they might in a great Meaſure, if not intirely, be recovered from the Writings of others. And I may venture to ſay, that if all the Quotations ever made from all the ancient Writings now in Europe were amaſſed together, the Bulk of them would by no Means be comparable to that of the Quotations taken from the New Teſtament alone. So that any Man might, with much better Reaſon diſpute, whether the Writings aſcribed to Homer, Demoſthenes, Virgil, or Cæſar, be in the main ſuch as they left them, than he could queſtion it concerning thoſe of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul, whether they were in the main ſo.

I ſay, in the main, becauſe we readily allow, that the Hand of a Printer or of a Tranſcriber, might chance in ſome Places to inſert one Letter or Word for another; and the various Readings of this, as well as all other ancient Books, prove that this has ſometimes been the caſe. But thoſe various Readings are generally of ſo little Importance, that he who can urge them as an Objection againſt the Aſſertion we are now maintaining, muſt have little Judgment, or little Integrity; and indeed after thoſe excellent Things which have been ſaid on the Subject by many Defenders of Chriſtianity, he muſt, if he has read their Writings, have little Modeſty too.

Since then it appears that the Books of the New Teſtament, as they now ſtand in the Original, are, without any material Alteration, ſuch as they were when they came from the Hands

of

of the ſacred Authors, nothing remains to complete this Part of the Argument, but to ſhew,

5. That the Tranſlation of them now in common uſe may be depended upon, as, in all material Particulars, agreeable to the Original.

This is a Fact, of which the generality of Readers are not able to judge immediately, tho' it is of the laſt Importance: It is therefore with great pleaſure I reflect, how ample Evidence they may have another way, to make their Minds eaſy on this Head. I mean, by the concurrent Teſtimony of others, in Circumſtances in which it cannot be imagined they would unite to deceive them.

There are few who preach the Goſpel of the Son of God, but have examined this Matter with the greateſt Care, and are able to judge in ſo eaſy a Caſe; and who will all with me unanimouſly declare, that the common Engliſh Tranſlation is in the main Faithful and Judicious. We do not indeed ſcruple, on ſome occaſion to animadvert upon it; but theſe Remarks never affect the Fundamentals of Religion, and ſeldom reach any farther than the Beauty of a Figure, or the Connection of an Argument.

But the Argument does not wholly reſt on the unanimous Suffrage of the Teachers of the Goſpel; they cannot themſelves poſſibly deceive in this particular. The different Sects of Proteſtants in this Kingdom bear witneſs to this Truth. For it is certain, that where a Body of Men diſſent from the public Eſtabliſhment, and yet agree with the Church from which they diſſent in uſing the ſame Tranſlation, though they are capable of examining and judging of it; is as great an Evidence as can be deſired, that ſuch a Tranſlation is right in the main. But the Diſſenters unanimouſly unite with us in bearing Teſtimony to the Oracles of God, as delivered in our own Language; and conſequently our Tranſlation may be depended upon.

Thus have I finiſhed the firſt Part of my Argument, and ſhewn that the Chriſtian Religion is certainly true, and that the New Teſtament is genuine. I ſhall next proceed to ſhew,

II. That from allowing the New Teſtament to be genuine, it will undeniably follow, that Chriſtianity is a divine Revelation.

And here a Perſon is at firſt ready to be loſt in the multiplicity of Arguments which ſurround him. It is very eaſy to find Proofs; but difficult to range and diſpoſe them in ſuch an order as beſt to illuſtrate and confirm each other. I ſhall therefore offer them in the following natural Series.

The Authors of the Books contained in the New Teſtament were certainly capable of judging concerning the Truth of the Facts they aſſerted: Their Character, ſo far as we can judge of it by their Writings, renders them worthy of Regard; and they were under no Temptation to attempt impoſing on the World, by ſuch a Story as they have given us, if it had been falſe. Nevertheleſs, it is certain in Fact, that they did gain Credit, and ſucceeded in a moſt amazing Manner, againſt all Oppoſition

poſition. It is therefore certain that the Facts which they aſſert were true; and if they were true, then it was reaſonable for their Cotemporaries, and it is reaſonable for us, to receive the Goſpel as a divine Revelation; eſpecially if we conſider what has happened in the World for the Confirmation of it, ſince firſt propagated by them. This is the Concluſion to which I would lead you; and therefore let us ſeriouſly conſider each of the Steps by which we arrive at it.

It is exceeding evident, that the Writers of the New Teſtament certainly knew, whether the Facts they aſſerted were true or falſe.

And this they muſt have known, for this plain Reaſon; becauſe they tell us, they did not truſt merely to the Report, even of Perſons whom they thought moſt credible, but were preſent themſelves when ſeveral of the moſt important Facts happened; and ſo received them on the Teſtimony of their own Senſes. On this St. John, in his firſt Epiſtle, Ch. i. Ver. 1—3. lays a very great and reaſonable Streſs: "That which we have ſeen with our Eyes;" and that not only by a ſudden Glance, but "which we have attentively looked upon, and which even our Hands have handled of the Word of Life." i. e. of Chriſt and his Goſpel, declare we unto you.

Let the common Senſe of Mankind judge here, Did not Matthew and John certainly know, whether they had perſonally and familiarly converſed with Jeſus of Nazareth or not? Whether he had choſen them for his conſtant Attendants and Apoſtles? Whether they had ſeen him heal the Sick, diſpoſſeſs Devils, and raiſe the Dead? And whether they themſelves had received from him ſuch miraculous Endowments, as they ſay he beſtowed upon them? Did not they know whether he fell into the Hands of his Enemies, and was publicly put to Death or not? Did not John know whether he ſaw him expiring on the Croſs or not? And whether he received from him a dying Charge, which he records Ch. xix. Ver. 27? Did he not know whether he ſaw him wounded in the Side with a ſpear or not? And whether he did, or did not ſee that Effuſion of Blood and Water, which was an infallible Argument of his being really dead? Concerning which, it being ſo material a Circumſtance, he adds, "He that ſaw it bare Record; and he knoweth that he ſaith true." i. e. That it was a Caſe in which he could not poſſibly be deceived And with regard to Chriſt's Reſurrection, did he not certainly know whether he ſaw our Lord again and again; and whether he handled his Body, that he might be ſure it was not a mere Phantom? what one Circumſtance of his Life could he certainly know, if he were miſtaken in this?

Did not Luke know whether he was in the Ship with Paul, when that extraordinary wreck happened, by which they were thrown aſhore on the Iſland of Malta? did he not know, whether, while they were lodged together in the Governor's Houſe, Paul miraculouſly healed one of the Family, and many other

other diſeaſed Perſons in the Iſl nd, as he poſitively aſſerts that he did in Acts xxviii.

Did not Paul certainly know whether Chriſt appeared to him on the way to Damaſcus, or not? whether he was Blind; and afterwards on the prayer of a Fellow-diſciple, received his Sight? or, was that a Circumſtance in which there could be room for Miſtake? did he not know whether he received ſuch extraordinary Revelations and extraordinary Powers, as to be able by the Impoſition of his Hands, or, by the Words of his Mouth, to work Miracles; and even to convey ſupernatural Endowments to others?

To add no more: did not Peter know, whether he ſaw the Glory of Chriſt's Transfiguration, and heard that Voice to which he ſo expreſly refers, when he ſays, "We have not cunningly deviſed Fables, but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty when there came ſuch a Voice to him; and this Voice we heard 2. Peter. Ch. i. 16. 18."

Now Matthew, John, Luke, Paul, and Peter, are by far the moſt conſiderable Writers of the New Teſtament; and I am ſure, when you reflect on theſe Particulars, you muſt own, that there are few Hiſtorians, ancient or modern, that could ſo certainly judge of the Truth of the Facts which they have related. The Reaſon why I have enlarged in ſtating ſo clear a Caſe is, that it is the Foundation of the whole Argument: and that this Branch of it alone cuts off Infidels from that Refuge which they have generally choſen that of pleading that the Apoſtles were Enthuſiaſts; and leaves them ſilent, unleſs they will ſay that they were Impoſtors. For you evidently ſee, that could we ſuppoſe theſe Facts to be falſe, they could by no Means pretend an involuntary Miſtake; but muſt in the moſt criminal and aggravated Senſe, as Paul himſelf expreſſes it, Cor. xv. 15. "Be found falſe Witneſſes of God." But however unreaſonable it would be to charge him with ſo notorious a Crime, will in part appear, if we conſider,

2. That the Character of theſe Writers, ſo far as we can judge by their Works, ſeems to render them worthy of Regard; and leaves no room to imagine that they intended to deceive us.

I ſhall not ſtay to ſhew at large, that they appear to have been Perſons of natural Senſe; and, at the Time of their Writing, of a compoſed Mind. For I verily believe, no Man that ever read the New Teſtament with Attention, could believe that they were Idiots or Madmen. Let the Diſcourſes of Chriſt in the Evangeliſts, of Peter and Paul in the Acts, as well as many Paſſages in the Epiſtles, be peruſed, and I will venture to ſay, he who is not even charmed with them, muſt be a Stranger to all the juſteſt Rules of polite Criticiſm. But he who ſuſpects that the Writers wanted common Senſe, muſt himſelf be moſt evidently deſtitute of it: and he who can ſuſpect they might poſſibly be diſtracted, muſt himſelf, in this Inſtance at leaſt, be juſt as mad as he imagines them to have been.

It was neceſſary, however, juſt to touch upon this; becauſe, unleſs we are ſatisfied that a Perſon be himſelf in what he writes, we cannot pretend to determine his Character from his Writings. Having peruſed the New Teſtament, obſerve what evident Marks it bears of Simplicity and Integrity, of Piety and Benevolence; upon which we will find them pleading the Cauſe of its Authors, with a reſiſtleſs, tho' gentle Eloquence; and powerfully perſuading the Mind, that Men who were capable of writing ſo excellently well, are not, without the ſtrongeſt Evidence to be ſuſpected of acting ſo deteſtably ill, as we muſt ſuppoſe they did, if in this ſolemn Manner they were carrying on an Impoſture, in ſuch Circumſtances as attended the Caſe before us. For,

1. The Manner in which they tell this amazing Story, is moſt happily adapted to gain our Belief. For as they tell it with a great detail of Circumſtances, which by no Means could be prudent in legendary Writers, becauſe it leaves ſo much the more room for Confutation; ſo they alſo do it in the moſt eaſy and natural Manner. There is no air of Declamation and Harangue; nothing that looks like Artifice and Deſign; no Apologies, no Encomiums, no Characters, no Reflections, no Digreſſions; but the Facts are recounted with great Simplicity, juſt as they ſeem to have happened; and thoſe Facts are left to ſpeak for themſelves in their great Author. It is plain, that the reſt of theſe Writers, as well as the Apoſtle Paul, did not affect excellency of Speech or flights of Eloquence, as the Phraſe ſignifies: but determined to know nothing, though amongſt the moſt learned and polite, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified. A Conduct which is the more to be admired, when we conſider how extraordinary a Theme theirs was, and with what abundant variety of moſt pathetic Declamation it would eaſily have furniſhed any common Writer: ſo that one would really wonder how they could forbear it. But they rightly judged, that a vain Affectation of Ornament, when recording a Story as of their own Knowledge, might perhaps have brought their Sincerity into Queſtion; and ſo have rendered the Croſs of Chriſt of no effect.

2 Their Integrity does likewiſe evidently appear in the Freedom with which they mention thoſe Circumſtances, which might have expoſed their Maſter and themſelves to the greateſt Contempt, among prejudiced and inconſiderate Men; ſuch as they knew they muſt generally expect to meet with. As to their Maſter, they ſcruple not to own, that his Country was infamous, his Birth and Education mean, and his Life indigent; that he was moſt diſdainfully rejected by the Rulers, and accuſed of Sabbath-breaking, Blaſphemy, and Sedition; that he was reviled by the Populace as a Debauchee, a Lunatic, and a Demoniac: And at laſt, by the united Rage of both Rulers and People, was publicly executed as the vileſt of Malefactors. with all imaginable Circumſtances of Ignominy, Scorn, and Abhorrence. Nor do

do they ſcruple to own, that Terror and Diſtreſs of Spirit into which he was thrown by his Sufferings, though this was a Circumſtance at which ſome of the Heathens took the greateſt Offence, as utterly unworthy ſo excellent and divine a Perſon. As to themſelves, the Apoſtles readily confeſs not only the meanneſs of their original Employments, and the Scandals of their former Life, but their Prejudices, their Follies, and their Faults, after Chriſt had honoured them with ſo holy a Calling. They acknowledge their lowlineſs of Apprehenſion under ſo excellent a Teacher; their Unbelief, their Cowardice, their Ambition, their raſh Zeal, and their fooliſh Contentions. So that, on the whole, they ſeem every where to forget that they are writing of themſelves; and appear not at all ſolicitous about their own Reputation; but only that they might repreſent the Matter juſt at it was, whether they went through Honour or Diſhonour, through evil Report or good Report. Nor is this all: for

3. It is certain that in their Writings are the moſt genuine Traces, not only of a plain and honeſt, but a moſt pious and devout, a moſt benevolent and generous Diſpoſition. Theſe appear eſpecially in the epiſtolary Parts of the New Teſtament, where indeed we ſhould moſt reaſonably expect to find them: and of theſe I may confidently affirm, that the greater Progreſs any one has made in Love to God, in Zeal for his Glory, in a compaſſionate and generous Concern for the preſent and future Happineſs of Mankind; the more humble, and candid, and temperate, and pure he is, the more ardently he loves Truth, and the more ſteadily he is determined to ſuffer the greateſt Extremity in its Defence. In a Word, the more his Heart is weaned from the preſent World, and the more it is fired with the Proſpects of a glorious Immortality, the more Pleaſure will he take in reading thoſe Writings; the more will he reliſh the Spirit which diſcovers itſelf in them; and find, that as Face anſwers to Face in Water, ſo do the Traces of Piety and Goodneſs which appear there, anſwer to thoſe which a good Man feels in his own Soul. Nay, I will add, that the warm and genuine Workings of that excellent and holy Temper, which every where diſcovers itſelf in the New Teſtament, have for many Ages been the moſt effectual Method of ſpreading a Spirit of Virtue and Piety in the World: And what of it is to be found in thoſe degenerate Days, ſeems principally owing to theſe incomparable and truly divine Writings.

Where then there are ſuch genuine Marks of an excellent Character, not only in laboured Diſcourſes, but in epiſtolary Writings, and thoſe ſometimes addreſſed to particular, and intimate Friends, to whom the Mind naturally opens itſelf with the greateſt Freedom, ſurely no candid and equitable judge would lightly believe them to be all counterfeit; or would imagine, without very ſubſtantial Proof, that Perſons who breathe ſuch exalted Sentiments of Virtue and Piety, ſhould be guilty of any notorious Wickedneſs; and in

proportion to the Degree of Enormity and Aggravation attending ſuch a ſuppoſed Crime, it may juſtly be expected, that the Evidence of their having really committed it, ſhould be unanſwerably ſtrong and convincing.

Now it is very certain, on the Principles laid down above, that if the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles was falſe, they muſt have acted as deteſtable and villainous a Part, as one can eaſily conceive. To be found, as the Apoſtle with his uſual Energy expreſſes it, falſe Witneſſes of God, in any ſingle Inſtance, and ſolemnly to declare to have done miraculouſly, what we, in our own Conſciences know, was never done at all, would be an audacious Degree of Impiety, to which none but the moſt abandoned of Mankind could arrive. Yet if the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles was falſe, as we have proved they could not be themſelves miſtaken in it, this muſt have been their Caſe; and that not in one ſingle Inſtance only, but in a thouſand. Their Life muſt, in effect, be one continued and perpetual Scene of Perjury; and all the moſt ſolemn Actions of it (in which they were ſpeaking to God, or ſpeaking of him as God the Father of Chriſt, from whom they received their Commiſſion and Powers) muſt be a moſt profane and daring Inſult, on all the acknowledged Perfections of his Nature.

And the Inhumanity of ſuch a Conduct would, on the whole, have been equal to its Impiety. For it was deceiving Men in their moſt important intereſts; and perſuading them to venture their whole future Happineſs, on the Power and Fidelity of one, whom, on this Suppoſition, they knew to have been an Impoſtor, and juſtly to have ſuffered a capital Puniſhment for his Crimes.

It would have been great guilt to have given the Hearts and Devotions of Men ſo wrong a Turn, even though they had found Magiſtrates ready to eſpouſe and eſtabliſh, yea, and to enforce the Religion they taught. But, on the contrary, to labour to propagate it in the midſt of the moſt vigorous and ſevere Oppoſition from them, muſt equally enhance the guilt and folly of the Undertaking. For by this Means they made themſelves acceſſary to the ruin of thouſands: and all the Calamities which fell on ſuch Proſelytes, or even on their remoteſt Deſcendants, for the ſake of Chriſtianity, would be in a great Meaſure chargeable on theſe firſt Preachers of it. The Blood of honeſt, yea (and ſuppoſing them, as you muſt, to have been involuntarily deceived) of pious, worthy, and heroic Perſons, who might otherwiſe have been the greateſt Bleſſings to the Public, would in effect be crying for Vengeance againſt them. And the Diſtreſſes of the Widows and Orphans, which thoſe Martyrs might leave behind him, would join to ſwell the Account.

So that, on the whole, the guilt of thoſe Malefactors, who are from time to time the Victims of public Juſtice, even for Robbery, Murder, or Treaſon, is ſmall when compared with that which we have now been ſuppoſing.

And

And corrupt as human Nature is, it appears to be utterly improbable, that twelve Men could be found, I will not ſay in one little Nation, but even on the whole Face of the Earth, who could be capable of entering into ſo black a Confederacy, on any Terms whatſoever.

And now in this View of the Caſe, let us make a ſerious Pauſe, and compare with it what we have juſt been ſaying of the Character of the Apoſtles of Jeſus, ſo far as an indifferent Perſon could conjecture it from their Writings; and then ſay, whether we can in our Hearts believe them to have been theſe abandoned Wretches, at once the Reproach and Aſtoniſhment of Mankind? We cannot ſurely believe ſuch Things of any, and much leſs of them, unleſs it ſhall appear, they were in ſome peculiar Circumſtances of ſtrong Temptation; and what thoſe Circumſtances could be, it is difficult even for Imagination to conceive.

But Hiſtory is ſo far from ſuggeſting any unthought-of Fact, to help our Imagination on this Head, that it bears ſtrongly the contrary way. And hardly any part of my Work is eaſier than to ſhew,

3 That they were under no Temptation to forge a Story of this kind, or to publiſh it to the World, knowing it to be falſe,

They could reaſonably expect no Gain, no Reputation by it. But, on the contrary, ſuppoſing it an impoſture, they muſt, with the moſt ordinary Share of Prudence, have foreſeen infamy and ruin, as the certain Conſequence of attempting it. For the grand Foundation of the Scheme was, that Jeſus of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jeruſalem by the Jewiſh Rulers, was the Son of God, and the Lord of all Things. I appeal to Men's Conſciences, whether this looks at all like the Contrivances of artful and deſigning Men.

It was evidently charging upon the Princes of their Country, the moſt criminal and aggravated Murder: indeed, all things conſidered, the moſt enormous Act of Wickedneſs, which the Sun had ever ſeen. They might therefore depend upon it, that theſe Rulers would immediately employ all their Art and Power to confute the Teſtimony, and to deſtroy their Perſons. Accordingly, one of them was preſently ſtoned, another quickly beheaded; and moſt of the reſt were ſcattered abroad into ſtrange Cities (as we learn from the Acts of the Apoſtles) where they would be ſure to be received with great Prejudices, raiſed againſt them amongſt the Jews by reports from Jeruſalem, and vaſtly ſtrengthened by their Expectations of a temporal Meſſiah: Expectations which, as the Apoſtles knew by their own Experience, it was exceeding difficult to root out of Men's Minds: Expectations which would render the Doctrine of Chriſt crucified, an inſeparable ſtumbling-block to the Jews.

Nor could they expect a much better Reception amongſt the Gentiles, with whom their Buſineſs was to perſuade them to renounce the Gods of their Anceſtors; and to depend on a Perſon who had died the Death of a Malefactor and a Slave, to perſuade them to forego the pompous Idolatries in which

they had been educated, and all the ſenſual Indulgencies with which their religion (if it might be called a Religion) was attended; to worſhip one viſible God through one Mediator, in the moſt plain and ſimple Manner; and to receive a ſet of Precepts, moſt directly calculated to controul and reſtrain not only the Enormities of Men's Actions, but the Irregularities of their Hearts. A moſt difficult undertaking! And to engage them to this, they had no other Arguments to bring, but ſuch as were taken from the Views of an inviſible State of Happineſs or Miſery, of which they aſſerted their crucified Jeſus to be the ſupreme Diſpoſer, who ſhould another Day diſpence his Bleſſings or his Vengeance, as their Goſpel had been embraced or rejected. Now, could it be imagined, that Men would eaſily be perſuaded, merely on the Credit of their Affirmation, or in Compliance with their Importunity, to believe Things which to their prejudiced Minds would appear ſo improbable, and to ſubmit to Impoſitions, to their corrupt Inclinations, ſo inſupportable? And if they could not perſuade them to it, what could the Apoſtles then expect? What, but to be inſulted as Fools or Madmen by one Sort of People; and by another to be perſecuted with the moſt ſavage and outrageous Cruelty, as Blaſphemers of the Gods, as Seducers of the People, and as Diſturbers of the public Peace? All which we know happened accordingly. Nay, they aſſure us, that their Lord had often warned them of it; and that they themſelves expected it; and thought it neceſſary to admoniſh their Followers to expect it too. And it appears, that, far from drawing back upon that Account, as they would ſurely have done if they had been governed by ſecular Motives, they became ſo much the more zealous and courageous; and animated each other to reſiſt even to Blood. Now as this is a great Evidence of the Integrity and Piety of their Character, and thus illuſtrates the former Head, ſo it ſerves to the Purpoſe now immediately in View, that is, it proves how improbable it is, that any Perſon of common Senſe ſhould engage in an impoſture, from which, as many have juſtly obſerved, they could, on their own Principles, have nothing to expect but Ruin in this World, and Damnation in the next. When we therefore conſider and compare their Character and Circumſtances, it appears utterly improbable, on various Accounts, that they would have attempted in this Article to impoſe upon the World. But ſuppoſe that in Conſequence of ſome unaccountable, as well as undiſcoverable Frenzy, they had ventured on the Attempt, it is eaſy to ſhow,

4 That humanly ſpeaking, they muſt quickly have periſhed in it; and their fooliſh Cauſe muſt have died with them, without ever gaining any Credit in the World.

One may venture to ſay this in general, on the Principles which I before laid down. But it appears ſtill more evident, when we conſider the Nature of the Fact they aſſerted, in Conjunction with the Methods they took to engage

engage Men to believe it: Methods, which had the Apoſtles been Impoſtors, muſt have had the moſt direct Tendency to ruin both their Scheme and themſelves

1 Let us a little more particularly reflect on the Nature of that grand Fact; namely, the Death, Reſurrection, and Exaltation of Chriſt: Which, as I obſerved, was the great Foundation of the Chriſtian Scheme, as firſt exhibited by the Apoſtles. The Reſurrection of a dead Man and his Aſcenſion into, and Abode in the upper World, was ſo ſtrange a Thing, that a thouſand Objections would immediately be raiſed againſt it: And ſome extraordinary Proof would juſtly be required as a Balance to them. Now I wiſh that the Rejecters of the Goſpel would ſet themſelves to invent ſome Hypotheſis, which ſhould have any Appearance of Probability, to ſhow how ſuch an amazing Story ſhould ever gain Credit in the World, if it had not ſome very convincing Proof. Where and when could it firſt begin to be received? Was it in the ſame, or a ſucceeding Age? Was it at Jeruſalem, the Spot of Ground on which it is ſaid to have happened? or in Greece, Italy, Aſia, or Africa? The Scene and Time may be changed, as one pleaſes; but the Difficulty cannot.

Take it in a parallel Inſtance: ſuppoſe twelve Men in London were now to affirm, that a Perſon executed there as a Malefactor in a public Manner, a Month, or ſix Weeks ago; or if you pleaſe, a Year, or five or ten Years ſince, for it is much the ſame; was a Prophet ſent from God with extraordinary Powers; that he was raiſed from the Dead; that they converſed with him after his Revival; and at laſt ſaw him taken up into Heaven. Would their united Teſtimony make them to be believed there? Or ſuppoſe them to diſperſe, and that one or two of them ſhould retire to Northampton, and go on ſtill more diſtant, ſuppoſe Leiceſter, Nottingham, or York, and tell their Story there: and that others were to carry it over to Paris, or Amſterdam, or to Vienna or Madrid; could they expect any more Credit with us, or with them, or hope for any Thing better than to be looked upon as Lunatics, and treated as ſuch? And if they ſhould go into other Places, and attempt to mend their Scheme, by ſaying their Maſter was put to Death an Hundred or two Hundred Years ago, when there could be no Hiſtorical Evidence of it diſcovered, and no Proof given but their own confident Aſſertion: would they remove, or would they not rather increaſe the Difficulty? Or would they in any of theſe Caſes gain Credit by the moſt dexterous Tricks of Legerdemain, of which you can ſuppoſe them Maſters? Eſpecially, if they ſhould undertake, in Conſequence of ſuch ſuppoſed Facts, to engage Men to renounce their Religion in which they had been educated; to deny themſelves in their deareſt Paſſions and moſt important worldly Intereſts: and even probably to hazard their Liberties and their Lives, in Dependance on a future Reward, to be received into a Place and State, which no Man living on

Earth

Earth had ever ſeen or known? You would readily allow this to be an inſuppoſable Caſe: and why ſhould you ſuppoſe it to have happened ſixteen or ſeventeen Hundred Years ago? You may aſſure yourſelves that the Reaſon and the Paſſions of Mankind were then as ſtrong as they are now. But let us a little more particularly conſider,

2. The Manner in which the Apoſtles undertook to prove the Truth of their Teſtimony to this Fact: and it will evidently appear, that inſtead of confirming their Scheme, it muſt have been ſufficient utterly to have overthrown it, had it been in itſelf the moſt probable Impoſture that the Wit of Man could ever have contrived. It is evident, they did not merely aſſert that they had ſeen Miracles wrought by this Jeſus, but that he had endowed themſelves with a variety of Miraculous Powers. And theſe they undertook to diſplay, not in ſuch idle and uſeleſs Tricks as ſlight of Hand might perform; but in ſuch ſolid and important Works, as appeared worthy of a Divine Interpoſition, and entirely ſuperior to Human Power: reſtoring, as they pretend, Sight to the Blind, Soundneſs to Lepers, Activity to the Lame, and in ſome Inſtances, Life to the Dead. Nor were theſe Things undertaken in a Corner, in a Circle of Friends or Dependants; nor were they ſaid to be wrought on ſuch as might be ſuſpected of being Confederates in the Fraud: but they were done often in the public Streets, in the Sight of Enemies, on the Perſons of ſuch as were utter Strangers to the Apoſtles; but ſometimes well known to Neighbours and Spectators, as having long laboured under theſe Calamities, to human Skill utterly incurable. Would Impoſtors have made ſuch Pretenſions as theſe? Or, if they had, muſt they not immediately have been expoſed and ruined?

Nor is there any Room at all to object, that perhaps the Apoſtles might not undertake to do theſe Things on the Spot, but only aſſert that they had done them elſewhere: for even then, it would have been impoſſible that they ſhould have gained Credit: and they would have ſeemed the leſs credible, on Account of ſuch a Pretence. Whatever Appearances there might have been of Gravity, Integrity and Piety, in the Converſation of Peter, for Inſtance; very few, eſpecially few that had known but little of him, would have taken it upon his Word, that he ſaw Jeſus raiſe Lazarus from the Dead at Bethany: but fewer yet would have believed it upon his Affirmation, had it been ever ſo ſolemn, that he had himſelf raiſed Dorcas at Joppa, unleſs he had done ſome extraordinary Work before them, correſpondent at leaſt, if not equal to that. One may eaſily think of invincible Objections, which otherwiſe might have been made: and undoubtedly the more ſuch Aſſertions had been multiplied, every new Perſon, Scene, and Fact had been an additional Advantage given to the Enemy, to have detected and confuted the whole

whole Scheme, which Peter and his Aſſociates had thus endeavoured to eſtabliſh.

But to come ſtill cloſer to the Point: If the New Teſtament be genuine, as I have already proved it, then it is certain, that the Apoſtles pretend to have wrought Miracles in the very Preſence of thoſe, to whom their Writings were addreſſed: Nay more, they profeſs likewiſe to have conferred thoſe miraculous Gifts in ſome conſiderable Degrees on others, even on the very Perſons to whom they write: And they appeal to their Conſciences with regard to the Truth of it. And could there poſſibly be room for Deluſion here? It is exceedingly remarkable to this Purpoſe, that Paul makes this Appeal to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians, when amongſt them were ſome Perſons diſaffected to him, who were taking all Opportunities to ſink his Character, and deſtroy his Influence. And could they have wiſhed for a better Opportunity than ſuch an Appeal? An Appeal, which, had not the Fact it ſuppoſed been certain, far from recovering thoſe that were wavering in their Eſteem, muſt have been ſufficient utterly to diſguſt his moſt cordial and ſteady Friends. And the ſame Remark may be applied to the Advices and Reproofs which the Apoſtle there gives, relating to the Uſe and Abuſe of their ſpiritual Gifts: Which had been moſt notoriouſly abſurd, and even ridiculous, had not the Chriſtians, to whom he wrote, been really poſſeſſed of them. And theſe Gifts were ſo plainly ſupernatural, that as it has been often obſerved, if it be allowed, that Miracles can prove a divine Revelation, and that the firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians be genuine, (of which by the Way there is at leaſt as pregnant Evidences, as that any Part of the New Teſtament is ſo) then it follows, by a ſure and eaſy Conſequence, that Chriſtianity is true. Nevertheleſs, other Arguments are not to be forgotten in this Survey. And therefore, as I have proved under this Head, that had the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles been falſe, it is not to be imagined, that they could have gained Credit at all; and eſpecially when they had put the Proof of their Cauſe on ſuch a Footing, as we are ſure they did. I am now to ſhow,

5. That it is certain in Fact, that the Apoſtles did gain early Credit, and ſucceeded in a moſt wonderful Manner: From whence it will follow, that their Teſtimony was true.

That the Apoſtles did indeed gain Credit in the World, is evident from what I before offered, in order to prove the early Prevalence of Chriſtianity in it, and this may be farther confirmed, from many Paſſages in the New Teſtament. And here I inſiſt not ſo much on expreſs hiſtorical Teſtimonies, though ſome of them are very remarkable; eſpecially that of the Brethren at Jeruſalem, who ſpeak of many Myriads of believing Jews, aſſembled at the Feaſt of Pentecoſt, mentioned in Chap. xxi. of the Acts. But I argue from the Epiſtles written to ſeveral Churches, which plainly prove, that there were Congregations of

of Chriſtians in Rome, Corinth, Epheſus, Coloſſe, Theſſalonica, Philippi, Laodicea, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Crete, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia, Bythinia, and many other Places: Inſomuch, that one of the Apoſtles could ſay, "That Chriſt had ſo wrought by him, to make the Gentiles obedient, not only in Word or Profeſſion, but in Deed too; that from Jeruſalem, even round about unto Illyrium, he had fully preached the Goſpel of Chriſt:" or as the Word imports, "had accompliſhed" the Purpoſes of it. And there is a great deal of Reaſon, both from the Nature of the Thing, and from the Teſtimony of ancient Hiſtory, to believe, that others of the Apoſtles had conſiderable Succeſs elſewhere. So that St. Paul might with Reaſon apply to them and their Doctrine, what is originally ſpoken of the Luminaries of Heaven, and the Inſtructions they communicate, "their Sound is gone out through all the Earth, and their Words to the End of the World."

So great was the Number of thoſe who were made Proſelytes to Chriſtianity, by the preaching of the Apoſtles. And we have all imaginable Reaſon to believe, that there were none of all theſe Proſelytes, but what were fully perſuaded of the Truth of the Teſtimony they bore: For otherwiſe no imaginable Reaſon can be given, for their entering themſelves into ſuch a Profeſſion. The Apoſtles had no ſecular Terrors to affright their Proſelytes; no ſecular Rewards to bribe them; no dazzling Eloquence to enchant them: On the contrary, all theſe were in a powerful Manner pleading againſt the Apoſtles: Yet their Teſtimony was received; and their new Converts were ſo thoroughly ſatisfied with the Evidence which they gave them of their Miſſion, that they encountered great Perſecutions, and chearfully ventured Eſtate, Liberty, and Life itſelf, on the Truth of the Facts they aſſerted: As plainly appears from many Paſſages in the Epiſtles, which none can think the Apoſtles would ever have written, if theſe firſt Chriſtians had not been in a perſecuted Condition.

Nor will it ſignify any Thing to object, that moſt of theſe Converts were Perſons of a low Rank and ordinary Education, who therefore might be more eaſily impoſed upon than others. For (not to mention Sergius Paulius, Dionyſius the Areopagite, or the Domeſtics of Cæſar's Houſhold, with others of ſuperior Station in Life) it is ſufficient to call to Mind, that the Apoſtles did not put their Cauſe on the Iſſue of laboured Arguments, in which the Populace might quickly have been entangled and loſt; but on ſuch plain Facts as they might judge of, as eaſily and ſurely as any others: Indeed, on what they themſelves ſaw, and in part too on what they felt.

Now I apprehend, this might be ſufficient to bring the Matter to a ſatisfactory Concluſion. It has been ſhewn, that as there is no Reaſon to believe, that the Apoſtles who certainly knew the Truth, would have attempted a Fraud of this kind,—So

if

if they had attempted it, they could not poſſibly have ſucceeded: Nevertheleſs, they did ſucceed in a very remarkable Manner. Whence it plainly follows, that what they teſtified was true.

6. That admitting the Facts which they teſtified concerning Chriſt to be true, then it was reaſonable for their Co-temporaries, and is reaſonable for us to receive the Goſpel, which they have tranſmitted to us as a divine Revelation.

The great Things they aſſerted were, that Jeſus was the Chriſt; and that he was proved to be ſo, by Prophecies accompliſhed in him, and by Miracles wrought by him, and by others in his Name. Let us attend to each of theſe, and I am perſuaded that we ſhall find them no contemptible Arguments; but muſt be forced to acknowledge, that the Premiſes being eſtabliſhed, the Concluſion muſt eaſily and neceſſarily follows. And this Concluſion, "that Jeſus is the Chriſt," taken in all its Extent, is an Abſtract of the Goſpel Revelation; and therefore is ſometimes put for the whole of it.

The Apoſtles, eſpecially when diſputing with the Jews, frequently argued from the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, in which they ſay many Things were expreſsly foretold, which were moſt literally and exactly fulfilled in Jeſus of Nazareth. Now, greatly to the Evidence, Confirmation, and Advantage of Chriſtianity, ſo it is that theſe Prophecies are to this Day extant in the original Language: and this in the Hands of a People moſt implacably averſe to the Goſpel. So that an attentive Reader may ſtill, in a great Meaſure, ſatisfy himſelf, as to the validity of the Argument drawn from them

On ſearching theſe ancient and important Records, we find not only in the General, that God intended to raiſe up for his People an illuſtrious Deliverer, who, among other glorious Titles, is ſometimes called the Meſſiah, or the anointed one: But we are more particularly told, that this great Event ſhould happen before the Government ceaſed in the Tribe of Judah, while the ſecond Temple was ſtanding; and a little before its Deſtruction, about four Hundred and ninety Years after a Command given to rebuild Jeruſalem; which was probably iſſued out in the ſeventh Year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, or at leaſt within a few Years before, or after it. 'Tis predicted that he ſhould be of the Seed of Abraham, born of a Virgin, of the Houſe of David, in the Town of Bethlehem; that he ſhould be anointed with an extraordinary Effuſion of the Divine Spirit; in Virtue of which he ſhould not only be a perfect and illuſtrious Example of univerſal Holineſs and Goodneſs, but ſhould alſo perform many extraordinary and beneficial Miracles: Nevertheleſs, that, for want of external Pomp and Splendor, he ſhould be rejected and inſulted by the Jews, and afterwards be cut off and ſlain by them. It is added, that he ſhould ariſe from the Dead, before his Body ſhould be corrupted in the Grave: and ſhould be received up to Heaven, and there ſeated at the right Hand of God: from whence he ſhould, in a

wonderful Manner, pour out his Spirit on his Followers; in Conſequence of which, though the Body of the Jewiſh People periſhed in their obſtinate Oppoſition to him, yet the Gentiles ſhould be brought to the Knowledge of the true God, and a Kingdom eſtabliſhed amongſt them, which, from ſmall Beginnings, ſhould ſpread itſelf to the End of the Earth, and continue to the remoteſt Ages.

Beſides theſe moſt material Circumſtances, there were ſeveral others relating to him, which were either expreſsly foretold, or at leaſt hinted at: all which, with thoſe already mentioned, had ſo evident an Accompliſhment in Jeſus (allowing the Truth of the Facts which the Apoſtles teſtified concerning him) that we have no Reaſon to wonder that they ſhould receive the Word with all Readineſs who ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether theſe Things were ſo predicted there, as the Apoſtles affirmed. For I am perſuaded that no wiſe and religious Perſon could imagine, that God would permit an Impoſtor to ariſe, in whom ſo great a variety of Predictions, delivered by ſo many different Perſons, and in ſo many diſtant Ages, ſhould have an exact Accompliſhment.

When the Apoſtles were preaching to Heathens, it is indeed true, that they generally waved the Argument from Prophecy, becauſe they were not ſo capable Judges of it. But then they inſiſted on another, which might as ſoon captivate their Belief, and as juſtly vindicate it; I mean, "the Miracles performed by Chriſt, and thoſe commiſſioned and influenced by him;" many of theſe were of ſuch a Nature, as not to admit of any Artifice or Deceit; eſpecially the moſt ſignal one of his Reſurrection from the Dead, which I may call a Miracle performed by, as well as upon, Chriſt; becauſe he ſo expreſsly declares, that he had himſelf a Power to reſume his Life at Pleaſure. The Apoſtles well knew, that this was a Fact of ſuch a Nature, that they who believed this, would never doubt of the reſt. They often therefore ſingle this out, and lay the whole Streſs of their Cauſe upon it. This they proved to be true by their own Teſtimony miraculouſly confirmed; and in proving this, they eſtabliſhed Chriſtianity on an impregnable Rock. For I may ſafely refer it to any to judge, whether it is an imaginable Thing, that God ſhould raiſe the dead Body of an Impoſtor; eſpecially when he had ſolemnly appealed to ſuch a Reſurrection, as a grand Proof of his Miſſion, and had expreſsly fixed the very Day on which it was to happen.

I perſuade myſelf that by all this 'tis evident, that they who on the Apoſtle's Teſtimony believed, that the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament were accompliſhed in Jeſus, and that God bore Witneſs to him by Miracles, and raiſed him from the Dead, had abundant Reaſon to believe, that the Doctrine which Chriſt taught was divine, and his Goſpel a Revelation from Heaven. And if they had Reaſon to admit this Concluſion, then it is plain that we, who have ſuch ſatisfactory Evidences on the one Hand, that the

Teſtimony

Teſtimony of the Apoſtles was credible; and on the other, that this was the Subſtance of it, have Reaſon alſo to admit this grand Inference from it, and embrace the Goſpel as a faithful Saying, and as well worthy of all Acceptation. This is the Thing I have attempted to prove; and here I ſhould finiſh the Argument, were it not for the Confirmation it may receive from ſome additional Conſiderations, which could not properly be introduced under any of the preceding Heads. I therefore add

7. In the laſt Place, That the Truth of the Goſpel has received farther and very conſiderable Confirmation, from what has happened in the World ſince it was firſt publiſhed.

And here I muſt deſire the Reader to conſider on the one Hand, what God has been doing to eſtabliſh it; and on the other, the Methods which its Enemies have been taking to deſtroy it.

1. Conſider, what God has been doing to confirm the Goſpel ſince its firſt Publication. And I will venture to aſſert, that it will prove a farther Evidence of its divine Original.

I might here argue at large, from its ſurprizing Propagation in the World;—from the miraculous Powers with which not only the Apoſtles, but ſucceeding Preachers of the Goſpel, and other Converts, were endowed;—from the accompliſhment of Prophecies recorded in the Old Teſtament;—and from the Preſervation of the Jews as a diſtinct People, notwithſtanding the various Difficulties and Perſecutions through which they have paſſed.

I might particularly urge, in Confirmation of the Truth of Chriſtianity, the wonderful Succeſs with which it was attended, and the ſurpriſing Propagation of the Goſpel in the World.

I have therefore endeavoured, under a former Head, to ſhew you, that the Goſpel met with ſo favourable a Reception in the World, as evidently proved, that its firſt Publiſhers were capable of producing ſufficient Evidence of its Truth; Evidence abſolutely incompatible with Impoſture. But I ſhall now carry this Remark farther, and aſſert, that, conſidering the Circumſtances of the Caſe, it is amazing, that even Truth itſelf, under ſo many Diſadvantages, ſhould have ſo illuſtrious a Triumph; and that its wonderful Succeſs ſo evidently proves ſuch an extraordinary Interpoſition of the Almighty in its Favour, as may juſtly be called a miraculous Atteſtation of it.

There was not only "one of a Family, or two of a City, taken and brought to Zion; but the Lord ſo haſtened it, in its appointed Time, that a little one became a thouſand, and a ſmall one a ſtrong Nation." And as the Apoſtles themſelves were honoured with very remarkable Succeſs, ſo this divine Seed was propagated ſo faſt in the next Age, that Pliny teſtifies, "He found the heathen Temples in Achaia almoſt deſerted:" And Tertullian afterwards boaſts, "That all Places, except thoſe Temples, were

filled with Chriſtians; ſo that were they only to withdraw, Cities and Provinces would be depopulated." Nor did the Goſpel only triumph thus within the Boundaries of the Roman Empire; for long before Tertullian was born, Juſtin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, which ſeems to have been written not much above an hundred Years after Chriſt's Death, declares, "That there was no Nation of Men, whether Greeks or Barbarians, not excepting theſe Savages, that wandered in Clans from one Region to another, and had no fixed Habitation, who had not learned to offer Prayers and Thankſgivings to the Father and Maker of all, in the Name of Jeſus who was crucified."

Now how is it poſſible to account for ſuch a Scene as this, but by ſaying the Hand of the Lord was with the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel, and therefore ſuch Multitudes believed, and turned to the Lord? How was it poſſible for ſo ſmall a Fountain to have ſwelled immediately into a mighty River, and even have covered the Face of the whole Earth, if it had not ſprung from the Sanctuary of God, and been rendered triumphant by his Almighty Arm?

Had this new Religion, ſo directly contrary to all the Prejudices of Education, been contrived to ſooth Men's Vices, to countenance their Errors, to defend their Superſtitions, or to promote their ſecular Intereſts, we might eaſily have accounted for its Prevalence in the World. Had its Preachers been profound Philoſophers, or polite and faſhionable Orators, many might have been charmed, at leaſt for a while, to follow them: or had the Princes and Potentates of the Earth declared themſelves its Patrons, and armed their Legions for its Defence and Propagation, Multitudes might have been terrified into the Profeſſion, though not a Soul could by ſuch Means have been rationally perſuaded to the Uſe of it. But without ſome ſuch Advantages as theſe, we can hardly conceive, how any new Religion ſhould ſo ſtrangely prevail; even though it had crept into the World in its darkeſt Ages, and the moſt barbarous Countries; and though it had been gradually propoſed in the moſt artful Manner, with the fineſt Veil induſtriouſly drawn over every Part, which might at Firſt have given Diſguſt to the Beholder.

But every one knows, that the very reverſe of all this was the Caſe of Chriſtianity. It is abundantly evident, from the apparent Conſtitution of the Religion of Jeſus, that the Luſts and Errors, the Superſtitions and Intereſts of carnal Men, would immediately riſe up againſt it as a moſt irreconcileable Enemy. It is known that the Learning and Wit of the Greeks and Romans were early employed to ridicule and obſtruct its Progreſs. It is known that as all the Herd of Heathen Deities were to be diſcarded, the Prieſts, who ſubſiſted by the ſuperſtitious Worſhip paid them, muſt in Intereſt find themſelves obliged to oppoſe it. It is known that the Princeſs of the Earth drew the Sword againſt it, and armed Torments and

and Death for the Deſtruction of its Followers. And yet it triumphed over all, though publiſhed in Ages and Places celebrated for Learning and Elegance; and propoſed, not in an ornamental and artificial Manner, but with the utmoſt Plainneſs; the Doctrines of the Croſs being always advanced as its grand Fundamentals, though ſo notorious a Stumbling-block both to the Jews and Gentiles; and the abſolute Neceſſity, not only of embracing Chriſtianity, but alſo of renouncing all Idol Worſhip, being inſiſted on immediately, and in the ſtrongeſt Terms, though it muſt make the Goſpel appear the moſt ſingular and unſociable Religion, that had ever been taught in the World.

Had one of the Wits or Politicians of theſe Ages ſeen the Apoſtles, and a few other plain Men, who had been educated among the loweſt of the People, as moſt of the firſt Teachers of Chriſtianity were, going out armed with nothing but Faith, Truth, and Goodneſs, to encounter the Power of Princes, the Bigotry of Prieſts, the Learning of Philoſophers, the Rage of the Populace, and the Prejudices of all; how would he have derided the Attempt, and ſaid with Sanballat, "What will theſe feeble Jews do?" But had he ſeen the Event, ſurely he muſt have owned, with the Egyptian Magi, in a far leſs illuſtrious Miracle, that it was the Finger of God; and might juſtly have fallen on his Face, even among thoſe whom he had inſulted, with an humble Acknowledgment, "that God was in them of a Truth."

I might here farther urge thoſe Miracles, which were wrought in Confirmation of the Chriſtian Doctrine, for a conſiderable Time after the Death of the Apoſtles.

The moſt ſignal and beſt atteſted among theſe was the diſpoſſeſſing of Devils, whom God ſeems to have permitted to rage with unuſual Violence about thoſe Times, that his Son's Triumph over them might be ſo much the more remarkable; and that the old Serpent might be taken in his own Craftineſs. 'Tis well known, that more than two Hundred Years after the Death of Chriſt, ſome of the moſt celebrated Defenders of the Goſpel, which the Church has in any Age produced, I mean Tertullian and Minutius Felix, do not only challenge any of their Heathen Enemies and Perſecutors, to bring them a Demoniac, engaging at the Hazard of their Lives to oblige the evil Spirit, in the Name and by the Authority of Chriſt, to quit his Poſſeſſion; but they do alſo appeal to it as a Fact publickly known, that thoſe who were agitated by ſuch Spirits, ſtood terrified and amazed in the Preſence of a Chriſtian; and that their pretended Gods were compelled then to confeſs themſelves Devils.

I wave the Teſtimonies of ſome later Writers in the Chriſtian Church, leſt the Credulity of their Temper, joined with the Circumſtances attending ſome of the Facts they record, ſhould furniſh out Objections againſt their Teſtimony. Though I think we cannot, without great Injuſtice to the Character of the learned and pious Auguſtine, ſuſpect the Truth of ſome amazing Facts of this Kind, which he has atteſted as of his own perſonal and certain Knowledge.

Nor

Nor muſt I forget to mention the Accompliſhment of ſeveral Prophecies, recorded in the New Teſtament, as a further Confirmation given by God, to the Goſpel.

The moſt eminent and ſignal Inſtance under this Head, is that of our Lord's Prediction concerning the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, as recorded by St. Matthew in his Twenty-fourth Chapter. The Tragical Hiſtory of it is moſt circumſtantially deſcribed by Joſephus, a Jewiſh Prieſt, who was an Eye-witneſs of it; and the Deſcription which he has given of this ſad Calamity ſo exactly correſponds with the Prophecy, that one would have thought, had we not known the contrary, that it had been written by a Chriſtian on Purpoſe to illuſtrate it. And one can never enough admire that ſeries of amazing Providences, by which the Author was preſerved from moſt imminent Danger, that he might leave us that invaluable Treaſure which his Writings contain.

We have no need of further Evidence than we find in him, of the exact Accompliſhment of what was propheſied concerning the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem. But our Lord had alſo foretold the long continued Deſolation of the Temple. And I cannot forbear mentioning the aweful Sanction which was given to that Part of the Prediction. For it is well known that a Heathen Hiſtorian has aſſured us, that when Julian the Apoſtate, in deliberate Contempt of that Prediction, ſolemnly and reſolutely undertook to rebuild it, his impious Deſign was fruſtrated miraculouſly again and again; and the Workmen conſumed by Globes of Fire which broke out from the Foundations.

The Prediction of St. Paul concerning the Man of Sin, and the Apoſtacy of the latter Times, is alſo well worthy of our Remark; and though a great deal of the Book of Revelation be ſtill concealed under a dark Veil, yet the Diviſion of the Roman Empire into ten Kingdoms; the Uſurpation, Perſecution, and Idolatry of the Romiſh Church, and the long Duration of the papal Power, with ſeveral other extraordinary Events, which no human Prudence could have foreſeen, and which have happened long ſince the publication of that Book, are ſo clearly foretold there, that I cannot but look on that Part of Scripture as an invaluable Treaſure, and I think it not at all improbable, that the more viſible Accompliſhment of ſome of its other Prophecies may be a great Means of reviving the Chriſtian Cauſe, which is at preſent ſo much on the decline.

The Preſervation of the Jews, as a diſtinct People, is another Particular under this Head, which well deſerves our attentive Regard.

'Tis plain that they are vaſtly numerous, notwithſtanding all the Slaughter and Deſtruction of this People in former and later Ages They are diſperſed among various moſt diſtant Nations, and particularly in theſe Parts of the World where Chriſtianity is profeſſed; and though they are expoſed to great Hatred and Contempt, on Account of their different Faith, and in moſt

moſt Places ſubjected to civil Incapacities, if not to unchriſtian Severities; yet they are ſtill moſt obſtinately tenacious of their Religion: which is the more wonderful, as their Fathers were ſo prone to Apoſtatize from it; and as moſt of them ſeem to be utter ſtrangers to Piety or Humanity, and pour the greateſt Contempt on the moral Precepts of their own Law, while they are ſo attached to the ceremonial Inſtitutions of it, troubleſome and inconvenient as they are. Now let us ſeriouſly reflect, what an evident Hand of Providence is here, that by their Diſperſion, Preſervation and Adherence to their Religion, it ſhould come to paſs, that Chriſtians ſhould daily ſee the Accompliſhment of many remarkable Prophecies concerning this People; and that we ſhould always have amongſt us ſuch a Crowd of unexceptionable Witneſſes to the Truth of thoſe ancient Hebrew Records, on which ſo much of the Evidence of the Goſpel depends: Records which are many of them ſo full to the Purpoſe for which we alledge them, that, as a celebrated Writer very well obſerves, "Had the whole Body of the Jewiſh Nation been converted to Chriſtianity, Men would certainly have thought they had been forged by Chriſtians; and have looked upon them in the ſame Light with the Prophecies of the Sybils, as made many Years after the Events which they pretend to foretel." And to add no more here, the Preſervation of the Jews, as a diſtinct People, evidently leaves Room for the Accompliſhment of thoſe Old and New Teſtament Prophecies, which relate to their national Converſion and Reſtoration: whereas that would be impoſſible in itſelf or at leaſt impoſſible to be known, if they were promiſcuouſly blended with other People. On the whole, 'tis ſuch a Scene in the Conduct of Providence, as I am well aſſured, cannot be paralleled in the Hiſtory of any other Nation upon Earth; and affords a moſt obvious and important Argument in Favour of the Goſpel

Thus has Chriſtianity been farther confirmed ſince its Publication, by what God has done to eſtabliſh it. It only remains that we conſider,

2. What Confirmation it receives from the Methods which its Enemies have taken to deſtroy it.

And theſe have generally been, either Perſecution, or Falſehood, or Cavilling at ſome Particulars in the Revelation, without entering into the grand Argument on which it is built, and fairly debating what is offered in its Defence. Now, who would not think the better of a Cauſe for being thus attacked?

At firſt 'tis known, that the Profeſſors, and eſpecially the Preachers of the Goſpel, were ſeverely perſecuted. In every City Bonds and Impriſonment awaited them. As ſoon as ever the Apoſtles began to preach Jeſus and his Reſurrection, the Jewiſh Rulers laid hold on them; and having confined and ſcourged them, ſtrictly prohibited their ſpeaking any more in that Name. A little while after Stephen was murdered; and afterwards James and ſome other of the Apoſtles. Now certainly ſuch a Conduct evidently betrayed a conſciouſneſs

conſciouſneſs that they were not able to anſwer the Apoſtles, and to ſupport their own Cauſe by the fair Methods of Reaſon and Argument, to which, ſo far as the Hiſtory informs us, they made no Pretence. but attempted to bear them down by Dint of Authority, and to ſilence them by brutal Force.

It would be endleſs to attempt ſhewing particularly how theſe unrighteous Methods were purſued in ſucceeding Ages and diſtant Countries. The ſavage Cruelties of Nero to theſe innocent and holy Men, were ſuch as raiſed the Pity even of their Enemies. Yet this was one of the leaſt extenſive and deſtructive of the ten general Perſecutions, which aroſe in the Roman Empire, beſides ſeveral others in the neighbouring Countries, of which Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory informs us.

Theſe early Enemies of the Goſpel added Falſhood and Slander to their Inhumanities. They endeavoured to murder the Reputations of Chriſtians, as well as their Perſons; and were not aſhamed to repreſent them as haters of the whole human Species, for no imaginable Reaſon, but that they would not aſſociate themſelves in their idolatrous Worſhip: But with regard to Charity and Truth, were ſtrongly bearing Teſtimony againſt it. Nay, they charged them with human Sacrifices, Inceſt, Idolatry, and all the Crimes, for which themſelves, and their fooliſh Gods, were indeed juſtly deteſtable: But from which the Chriſtians knew how to vindicate themſelves, highly to their own Honour, and to the everlaſting Reproach of theſe malignant and peſtilent Accuſers. And they have not failed to do it in many noble Apologies, which through the divine Providence are tranſmitted to us, and are incomparably the moſt valuable of any ancient uninſpired Writings.

Such were the infamous, the ſcandalous Methods, by which the Goſpel was oppoſed, in the earlieſt Ages of the Church; and I cannot forbear adding, that the Meaſures more lately taken to ſubvert it, eſpecially among ourſelves, ſeem to me rather to reflect a Glory on it. The unhappy Enemies of the Goſpel of the Son of God, have been told again and again, that we put the Proof of it on plain Fact. They themſelves do not, and cannot deny, that it prevailed early in the World, as we have ſhewn at large. There muſt have been ſome Man or Body of Men who firſt introduced it; they generally confeſs, that Chriſt and his Apoſtles were the Perſons, and theſe Apoſtles, on whoſe Teſtimony what we know of Chriſt chiefly depends, muſt have been Enthuſiaſts or Impoſtors, if their Teſtimony was falſe. Now which of theſe Schemes will the Unbelievers take? It ſeems, that the Deiſts of the preſent Age fix on neither, as being ſecretly conſcious they can ſupport neither; but they content themſelves with cavilling at ſome Circumſtances attending the Revelation, without daring to encounter its grand Evidence; that is, they have been laborioufly attempting to prove it to be improbable, or abſurd, to ſuppoſe that to have been, which nevertheleſs

theleſs plainly appears to have been Fact. One of them moſt weakly and ſophiſtically attempts to prove, in defiance of the common Senſe of Mankind, that " the Light of Nature is a perfect Rule," and therefore, that all Revelation is needleſs, and indeed impoſſible. Another diſguiſes the Miracles of Chriſt by falſe and fooliſh Repreſentations of them, and then ridicules them as idle Tales. A third takes a great deal of fruitleſs Pains to ſhew, that ſome Prophecies, referred to in the New Teſtament, are capable of another Senſe, different from that on which the Apoſtles have taken them. Theſe Things have been ſet in a very artful and fallacious light by Perſons, whoſe Names will, perhaps, be tranſmitted to Poſterity, with the infamous Glory of having been Leaders in the Cauſe of Infidelity; but not a Man of them undertakes to aſcertain the grand Fact. Nay, they generally take no more Notice of the poſitive Evidences by which it is even demonſtrated, than if they had never heard it propoſed; though they cavil at incidental Paſſages in thoſe Books in which it is moſt clearly ſtated. And as for what they have urged, though perhaps ſome who were before weary of Chriſtianity, may have taken occaſion to reject it; and others, for want of conſulting the Anſwers to them, may have been unwarily enſnared; yet the Examination of theſe Points has been greatly for the Honour and Vindication of the Truth, which ſeems on this occaſion to have been ſet in a clearer and ſtronger light than ever, at leaſt in theſe latter Ages.

The Cauſe of Chriſtianity has greatly gained by Debate, and the Goſpel comes like fine Gold out of the Furnace, which the more it is tried, the more it is approved. I own, the Defenders of the Goſpel have appeared with very different degrees of Ability for the Work; nor could it be otherwiſe among ſuch Numbers of them: but on the whole, though the Patrons of Infidelity have been Maſters of ſome Wit, Humour, and Addreſs, as well as of a moderate ſhare of Learning, and generally much more than a moderate ſhare of Aſſurance; yet ſo great is the force of Truth, that (unleſs we may except thoſe Writers who have unhappily called for the aid of the civil Magiſtrate in the Controverſy, I cannot recollect that I have ſeen any Defence of the Goſpel, which has not, on the whole, been ſufficient to eſtabliſh it, notwithſtanding all the ſophiſtical Arguments of its ſubtile Antagoniſts.

This is an Obſervation that is continually gaining new Strength, as new Aſſaults are made upon the Goſpel; and I cannot forbear ſaying, that, as if it were by a kind of judicial Infatuation, ſome who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the wretched Cauſe of Infidelity, have been permitted to fall into ſuch groſs Miſrepreſentations, ſuch ſenſeleſs Inconſiſtencies, ſuch palpable Falſhoods, and in a Word, into ſuch various and malignant ſuperfluity of Naughtineſs, that, to a wiſe and pious Mind, they muſt appear like thoſe venomous Creatures, which are ſaid to carry an Antidote in their Bowels a-

gainſt their own Poiſon. Nay, ſome of them have even anſwered their own Objections, particularly Lord Bolingbroke, who has given up ſeveral of the deiſtical Objections, and even acknowledged the divine Original of the Goſpel; for he aſſerts, "That no Religion ever appeared in the World, whoſe natural Tendency was ſo much directed to promote the peace and happineſs of Mankind," Vol. iv. Pag. 281, 282. He declares, that "No Syſtem can be more ſimple and plain than that of natural Religion as it "ſtands in the Goſpel," Vol. iv. P. 290, 292. He avers, that "he will not ſay, that the Belief that Jeſus was the Meſſiah is the only Article of Belief neceſſary to make Men Chriſtians. There are other Things doubtleſs contained in the Revelation he made of himſelf, dependant on, and relative to this Article, without the Belief of which, I ſuppoſe our Chriſtianity would be very defective. But this I ſay, that the Syſtem of Religion which Chriſt publiſhed, and his Evangeliſts recorded, is a complete Syſtem of all the Purpoſes of Religion, natural and revealed. It contains all the Duties of the former, it inforces the whole Law of Faith by promiſing Rewards and threatening Puniſhments, which he declares he will diſtribute when he comes to judge the World," Vol. iv P. 314. He alloweth, that "the Goſpel is in all Caſes one continued Leſſon of the ſtricteſt Morality, of Juſtice, of Benevolence, and of univerſal Charity," Vol. iv. P. 188. He profeſſeth a great concern for true Chriſtianity in Oppoſition to Theology, and ſays, that „genuine Chriſtianity was taught of God," ibid. P. 349. And not to multiply Paſſages to this purpoſe, he pronounces, that the Chriſtian Syſtem of Faith and Practice was revealed by God himſelf, and it is abſurd and impious to aſſert, that the divine Logos revealed it incompletely or imperfectly. Its ſimplicity and plainneſs ſhewed, that it was deſigned to be the Religion of Mankind, and manifeſted likewiſe the Divinity of its Original." Vol. iii. P. 451. After reading theſe Quotations, and a great variety of others, which might be produced from his Lordſhip's Writings, the Reader may eaſily judge what Religion has to fear from this noble Writer's Arguments, if his whole Works are read with Attention; and I will venture to aſſert, that he has himſelf entirely anſwered his own Objections.

Thus have I given the Reader a brief View of the chief Arguments in proof of Chriſtianity; and the ſum of the whole is this:

The Goſpel is probable in Theory; as conſidering the Nature of God, and the Circumſtances of Mankind, there was Reaſon to hope a Revelation might be given: and if any were given, we ſhould naturally apprehend its internal Evidence would be ſuch as that of the Goſpel is, and its external ſuch as it is ſaid to be. But it is alſo true in Fact; for Chriſtianity was early profeſſed, as it was firſt introduced by Jeſus of Nazareth, whoſe Life and Doctrines were publiſhed by his immediate Attendants; whoſe Books are ſtill preſerved in the original Language, and, in the main

main are faithfully tranſlated into our own; ſo that the Books of the New Teſtament now in uſe, may be depended upon as written by the Perſons whoſe Names they bear. And admitting this, the Truth of the Goſpel follows by a Train of very eaſy Conſequences; for the Authors certainly knew the Truth of the Facts they relate; and conſidering what appears in their Character and Circumſtances, we can never believe they would have attempted to deceive us; or if they had, they could not have gained Credit in the World; but they did gain it in a very remarkable Manner; therefore the Facts they atteſted are true: and the Truth of the Goſpel evidently follows from the certainty of thoſe Facts, and is greatly confirmed by what has happened in the World ſince the firſt Publication of it.

This is the ſum of what I flatter myſelf I have ſufficiently proved: and ſhall now conclude what I have to ſay on this Subject, with a few Words by way of Reflection.

1. Let us gratefully acknowledge the divine Goodneſs, in favouring us with ſo excellent a Revelation, and confirming it to us by ſuch ample Evidence.

We ſhould daily adore the God of Nature, for lighting up the Sun, that glorious though imperfect Image of his own unapproachable Luſtre; and appointing it to gild the Earth with its various Rays, to chear us with its benign Influences, and to guide and direct us in our Journeys, and our Labours. But how incomparably more valuable is that "Day-ſpring from on High, which hath viſited us, to give Light to them that ſit in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death, and to guide our Feet into the Way of Peace?" Oh Chriſtians, for I now addreſs myſelf to you, whoſe Eyes are ſo happy to ſee, and yours Ears to hear, what Reaſon have you for daily and hourly Praiſe: when your Minds are delighted with contemplating the Riches of goſpel Grace, when you view with wonder and joy the harmonious Contrivance of our Redemption, when you feel the Burthen of your Guilt removed, the Freedom of your Addreſs to the Throne of Grace encouraged, and ſee the Proſpect of a fair Inheritance of eternal Glory opening upon you; then in the pleaſing Tranſports of your Souls, borrow the joyful Anthem of the Pſalmiſt, and ſay, with the humbleſt Gratitude and Self-reſignation," God is the Lord who ſheweth us Light; bind the Sacrifice with Cords, even to the Horns of the Altar. "Adore God, who firſt commanded the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs," that by the Diſcoveries of his Word, and the Operations of his Spirit, he hath" ſhined in your Hearts to give you the Knowledge of his Glory, as reflected from the Face of his Son." Let us all adore him that this Revelation hath reached us, who live in an Age and Country ſo diſtant from that in which it firſt appeared; while there are to this very Day, not only dark Corners, but Regions of the Earth, that "are full of the Habitations of Idolatry and Cruelty,"

Let me peculiarly Addreſs myſelf to thoſe whoſe Education and Circumſtances of Life have given them Op-

portunities of a fuller Enquiry into the ſtate of thoſe ancient or modern Nations, that have been left merely to the light of unaſſiſted Reaſon; even to thoſe who are acquainted with the Hiſtory of their Gods, the Rites of their Prieſts, the Tales and even the Hymns of their Poets, thoſe beautiful Trifles; nay, I will add, the Reaſonings of their ſageſt Philoſophers; all the precarious, and all the erroneous Things they have ſaid, where Religion and Immortality are concerned. I have ſometimes thought that God gave to ſome of the moſt celebrated pagan Writers that uncommon ſhare of Genius and Eloquence, that they might as it were by their Art embalm the Monſters of Antiquity; that ſo ſucceeding Ages might ſee in a more affecting View than we could otherwiſe have done, how weak the human Mind is in its beſt Eſtate, and the Need which the greateſt, as well as the meaneſt of Mankind, have of being taught by a Revelation from above. Permit me to remind you, that while you are daily converſing with ſuch Monuments as theſe, and are alſo ſurveying the Evidences of Chriſtianity, in a larger and more diſtinct View than it was poſſible for me here to propoſe them, you are under peculiar Obligations to be very thankful for the Goſpel yourſelves, as well as to compaſſionate the Cauſe of thoſe to whom it has never been offered, or by whom it is ſlighted. And this leads me to another Reflection,

2 What Reaſon have we to pity thoſe who reject this glorious Goſpel, even when they have Opportuuities of enquiring into its cleareſt Evidences!

Such undoubtedly we have in our own Age and Nation: and ſurely we ſhould ſometimes beſtow a compaſſionate Thought upon them, and lift up humble Prayers for them, that God, peradventure, may give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth, that they may recover themſelves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are now led Captive by him at his Pleaſure; we ſhould pity Heathens and Mahometans under their Darkneſs and Errors; but how much more deplorable is the Caſe of theſe, who, though they dwell in Emanuel's Land, and in the Valley of Viſion, turn it into the Valley of the ſhadow of Death, by cloſing their Eyes againſt ſo bright a Luſtre, and ſtopping their Ears againſt the Voice of the Charmer? They are indeed, in their own Conceit, the only People, and Wiſdom will die with them: ſo that, to be ſure, they will Scorn our pity. But who can forbear it? Is there a more melancholy thought than this, that the Son of God ſhould have done ſo much to introduce and eſtabliſh the Goſpel, and his Spirit ſo much to perpetuate and encreaſe its Evidence: and that, after all, it ſhould be contemptuouſly deſpiſed, even by Creatures who are periſhing without it? That the bleſſed Jeſus, inſtead of being received with open Arms as the great Deliverer, ſhould either be treated as an empty Name; or if acknowledged to be a real Perſon, ſhould then be repreſented as a viſionary Enthuſiaſt, or a wicked Impoſtor? for there is no other Alternative; and this not only, though I believe moſt frequently by Men of profligate and abandoned Lives;

Lives; but ſometimes by Perſons of external Morality and Decency, of great Humanity and ſweetneſs of Temper (for ſuch I know are to be found among them) as well as Men of Wit and Genius, of Politeneſs and Learning, of human Prudence and Experience in Affairs. I may alſo add, that it is the Caſe of ſome who were the children of pious parents, who were trained up in religious exerciſes, who once diſcovered ſerious impreſſions, and gave very encouraging hopes, Alas, whither are they fallen! How ſhall we ſhelter thoſe that were once our brethren, that are perhaps ſtill our Friends, from the aweful ſentence which the Goſpel denounces againſt all that reject it, without any Exception? As to the wretches that add inſult and deriſion to their Infidelity, I tremble to think of that load of guilt which they are bringing upon themſelves; and how near they approach to the unpardonable Sin, if they have not already committed it. For the reſt, who behave in a more modeſt and ſober Manner, it will, no doubt, be a very difficult Taſk to convince them: and ſo much the rather, as ſome of them, by too eaſy a Tranſition, have renounced many of the moſt important Principles of natural Religion: nay, I might add even the whole of it, together with the Chriſtian Revelation. But the influences of divine Grace are Almighty. Let us recommend them to it, and omit no other proper Method, either of recovering ſuch as are already ſeduced, or at leaſt of ſecuring thoſe who are not yet infected: but may be, as moſt of the Youth are, eſpecially in the moſt populous Places, in imminent Danger of the Contagion. To this End let me add,

3. How reaſonable is it, that Chriſtians ſhould form a familiar Acquaintance with the great Evidences of our common Faith?

It is what we ſo apparently owe to the Honour of God, to the Intereſt of Chriſt, to the Peace of our own Souls, and the Edification of others, that I hope I need not to urge it at large, eſpecially conſidering what has been ſaid before. In Conſequence of all, let it be your care to make the Evidences of Chriſtianity the Subject of your ſerious Reflections and frequent Converſe. Eſpecially ſtudy your Bibles, where ſuch Marks of Truth and Divinity are to be found, that I believe few who have familiarly known them, and have had a Reliſh for them, were ever brought to make Shipwreck of their Faith as it is in Jeſus. Above all, let it be your Care to act on the Rules which are here laid down: and then ye will find your Faith growing in a happy Proportion, and Experience the Truth of our Saviour's Declaration, that if any Man will reſolutely and faithfully do his Will, he ſhall know of the Chriſtian Doctrine, whether it be of God. I verily believe, that 'tis the Purity of its Precepts which lies at the bottom of moſt Men's Oppoſition to it: or a natural Pride of Heart, which gives them an Averſion againſt ſo humbling a Scheme; or a fond Affectation of ſeeming wiſer than others, in rejecting what moſt of their Neighbours do, at leaſt profeſs, to believe. When theſe unhappy Prejudices and Conceptions are by divine

Grace

Grace conquered and rooted out, the Evidence of Truth will daily appear with an increaſing Luſtre: As the Light of the Sun does to an Eye recovering from a Film with which it had been overgrown; and which before had veiled it with Midnight in the midſt of Noon. Once more,

4 How ſolicitous ſhould we be to embrace and obey that Goſpel, which comes attended with ſuch abundant Evidences!

I may undoubtedly addreſs myſelf to moſt of my Readers, and ſay, as Paul did to King Agrippa, "Believeſt thou the Prophets? I know that thou believeſt;" yet let me intreat and charge you, not to reſt here; but attentively to examine how far your Hearts are affected, and your Lives regulated by ſuch a Belief. The Chriſtian Revelation is a practical Thing; and is heard, believed, and profeſſed in vain, if it be not obeyed.

In this Goſpel the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all the ungodlineſs of Men; but it is revealed with redoubled Fury againſt that audacious Sinner, who holds the Truth in unrighteouſneſs. In this Goſpel the bleſſed Jeſus is exalted, both as a Prince and a Saviour; and it is not with impunity, that the impenitent Rebel can reject his Yoke, and trample on his Blood. What muſt they expect who have poured contempt on ſuch a Sovereign, and on ſuch a Redeemer?

Let it be earneſtly and frequently recollected, that this Goſpel is the touch-ſtone by which you are one Day to be tried; the Balance in which an impartial judge will weigh you; and muſt, on the whole, prove your everlaſting Triumph, or your everlaſting Torment. The Almighty did not introduce it with ſuch ſolemn Notice, ſuch high Expectation, ſuch pompous Miracles, ſuch aweful Sanctions, that Men might reject, or diſhonour it at Pleaſure; but it will certainly be found, to the greateſt and meaneſt of thoſe that hear it, a Saviour of Life unto Life, or a Saviour of Death unto Death.

Let it therefore be your immediate Care, to enquire, which of theſe it is likely to prove to your Souls; remember it is ſo far from being a vain Thing, that it is really your very Life.

If it has been hitherto deſpiſed, and that bleſſed Redeemer, in whom it ſo evidently Centers, has been neglected, aſſure yourſelves that all I have ſaid in confirmation of its Truth, proves only that the hand-writing of God is ſet to your Condemnation. Allow yourſelves therefore not a moment's Reſt, till you have with humble Submiſſion applied to his Throne, while there is yet hope that it may be reverſed.

And for you who have hitherto believed and obeyed the Goſpel, let it be your Care to defend and adorn it; "be blameleſs and harmleſs, the Children of God without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation, ſhining among them as Lights in the World; perhaps your Example may not only ſerve to entertain their Eyes, but to guide their Feet into the Way of Peace, and engage them alſo to join with you in glorifying your Father which is in Heaven.

The NATIVITY



THE

LIFE

OF OUR

LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

CHAP. I.

From the BIRTH of CHRIST to the Beginning of the First Paſſover.

AS an Introduction to the following Hiſtory, it may not be improper to inform our Readers of the true Meaning and Signification of the Word Goſpel, the Title of the four Treatiſes from which this Narrative is taken.

The Word Evangelium ſignifies, in general, Good News, and is of the ſame Import with our Saxon Word Goſpel; only in the ſacred Uſe of them both there ſeems to be a Metonymy, whereby the Words that denote good News, are ſet to ſignify the Hiſtory of that good News, viz. of the Birth and Life, the Miracles and Doctrine, the Death and Reſurrection of our Saviour Chriſt; all of which, put together, do make up the joyful Tidings, which we call the Goſpel: And from this Etymology of the Word, the Perſons who have recorded the Life and Actions of our Saviour, are called Evangeliſts, or Writers of the Goſpel. The Works of this Kind, which are received as canonical, are but four, viz. that of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John; but the ſpurious Pieces which are handed down to us (even though ſeveral of them be loſt) do exceed the Number of forty. The Truth is, the antient Hereticks began generally with attacking the Goſpels, in order either to main-

tain their Errors or excuſe them. To this Purpoſe ſome rejected all the genuine Goſpels, and ſubſtituted others, that were ſpurious, in their Room. This produced the Goſpels of Apelles, Baſilides, Cerinthus, the Ebionites and Gnoſticks. Others corrupted the true Goſpels, by ſuppreſſing whatever gave them any Trouble, and inſerting whatever might favour their erroneous Doctrines. Thus the Nazarenes corrupted the original Goſpel of St. Matthew, as the Marcionites did that of St. Luke: while the Alogians rejected St. John, as the Ebionites did St Matthew; and the Valentinians only acknowledged St. John, as the Cerinthians did St. Mark.

The two principal Prophets who determine the Period when our Lord was to appear in the World, are Daniel and Haggai. Daniel foretels, that at "the End of the ſeventy prophetical Weeks," i. x. at the Expiration of four hundred Years after the Building of the Walls of Jeruſalem, the "Meſſiah ſhall come," Dan. x. 25. and Haggai propheſies, that before the Deſtruction of the ſecond Temple (even when the "Sceptre was departed from Judah," Gen. xliv, 25.) the "Deſire of all Nations ſhall come," and by his frequent perſonal Appearance in the Temple, make the "Glory of the latter Houſe much greater than that of the former," Hagg. ii. 7, &c.

In the Year of the World 3999, the Time foretold by theſe Prophets for the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Evangeliſt St. Luke gives the Account of the Birth of his great forerunner John the Baptiſt. But firſt we ſhall premiſe ſomething of his Character and Miſſion from Scripture.

There are two Places in the Prophets referred to, both by our Saviour and his Evangeliſts, wherein the Baptiſt is deſcribed under this Character. The former is in the Prophet Iſaiah, "The Voice of one crying in the Wilderneſs, prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make ſtreight in the Deſert, an Highway for our God," chap. xl. 3. and the latter which is more plain and expreſs) is in Malachi, "Behold I will ſend my Meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the Way before me, &c." chap. iii. 1. Both the Paſſages allude to Harbingers, and ſuch other Officers, as upon the Journies of Princes, are employed to take Care that the Ways be levelled, and put in Order, and all ſuch Obſtructions removed, as might hinder their Paſſage, or render it leſs commodious: And the Manner in which the Baptiſt thus prepared the Way of the Lord, was by his Preaching, and by his Baptiſm. By his Preaching he endeavoured to bring the Jews to a due Senſe of their Sins; to abate their Confidence in being of Abraham's Seed and punctual Obſervers of the ceremonial Law; and to forewarn all of the dreadful Effects of God's Anger, who did not bring forth Fruits worthy of Repentance. And by his Baptiſm, when adminiſtered to ſuch Perſons as were under the Obligation of the Law, he plainly ſhewed, that he was therein admitting them to ſome Privileges, which they had not before, viz. the Remiſſion of their Sins upon their Faith

Faith and Obedience to him, who was the Meſſenger of the Covenant. Since therefore the Baptiſt was born ſix Months before our Saviour, and entered upon his Miniſtry ſix Months before our Saviour began his; and ſince no Part of his Doctrine terminated in himſelf, and his Baptiſm referred every one to Chriſt for Acceptance and Salvation; he is very properly ſaid to be his Harbinger, "a Meſſenger ſent to prepare his Way before him," or to ſet all Things in Readineſs for his Approach, by putting an End to the old, and making an Entrance into the new Diſpenſation; in which Senſe he is repreſented by the Fathers, as a kind of middle Partition between the Law and the Goſpel; of the Law, as a Thing now come to a Period, and of the Goſpel, as commencing under him, who was ſhortly to make his Appearance. But to proceed in our Narrative.

While his Father Zacharias (who was a Prieſt of the eighth Courſe, viz. the Courſe of Abiah) was executing his Office at Jeruſalem, (which was in the latter Part of the Reign of Herod the Great) it came to his Lot to go into the Temple with his Cenſer in his Hand, to burn Incenſe, while the People without were offering up their Supplications in the Court, that was called the Court of Iſrael. At the Altar of Incenſe he was greatly ſurpriſed with the Sight of an Angel ſtanding on the right Side of it; but the Angel ſoon diſſipated his Fears, with the Joyful News, that God intended to bleſs him with a Son, whoſe Name ſhould be John, who ſhould prove a Perſon of uncommon Merit, and be appointed to the Office of Harbinger to the Meſſiah, who in a ſhort Time was to make his Appearance.

The Senſe of his own great Age, as well as his Wife's long Sterility, made Zacharias expreſs a Kind of Diffidence in his Promiſe; and for his farther Satisfaction, to deſire ſome Miracle in Confirmation of it: Whereupon the Angel let him know, "That he was no leſs than Gabriel, a ſpecial Attendant on God's Throne, and diſpatched on purpoſe to inform him of this great Happineſs; but ſince he was ſo incredulous, as to require a Sign, he ſhould have ſuch an one as would be both a Puniſhment of his Unbelief, and a Confirmation of his Faith; for until the Birth of the Child, he ſhould be both deaf and dumb:" Which accordingly came to paſs: for when he came to the People, who waited to receive his Benediction, he made ſigns, that he was not able to ſpeak to them, and they thence inferred, that he had ſeen ſome extraordinary Viſion within. After the Time of Miniſtration, however, was over, he returned home, and it was not long before his Wife Elizabeth perceived herſelf with Child, though her Modeſty made her conceal it for the Space of five Months.

Before we proceed in the Thread of our Hiſtory, the following Remarks may be very neceſſary.

Some of the Fathers were of opinion, that this Zacharias was, at this Time High-prieſt, upon a falſe Suppoſition, that the Offering of Incenſe was reſerved for the High-prieſt-only: But,

beſides the Teſtimony of Joſephus, who tells us expreſly, that Simon the Son of Boethos, was High-prieſt this Year; it appears from St. Luke himſelf, that Zacharias was no more than an ordinary Prieſt of the Family or Courſe of Abiah, which of the four and twenty Courſes appointed by David for the Service of the Temple, when it ſhould be built, was the eighth, 2 Chron. xxvi, 10. For tho' it was the High-prieſts Prerogative, on the great Day of Expiation, to enter into the Holy of Holies, and there burn Incenſe, which no ordinary Prieſt, might do, Lev. xvi. 12. yet in the common Service of the Day, each Prieſt, whoſe Lot it was, went every morning and Evening into the Sanctum, or body of the Temple, and there burnt the daily Incenſe upon the Altar, which was placed before the Veil of the moſt holy Place, Exod. xxx. 6, &c. For theſe and ſeveral other Reaſons, which Annotators have produced, it ſeems plain, that Zacharias could not poſſibly be High-prieſt at this Time; and, whatever Credit may be given to the Tradition, That by the Order of Herod the Great, he was put to Death, between the Porch and the Altar, viz. in the Incloſure that ſurrounded the Altar of Burnt-Offering; and that, when every one was ignorant of his Murder, a certain Prieſt, thinking that he ſtayed too long, entered into the Temple, and found him dead, and his Blood congealed upon the ground, and at the ſame Time hearing a Voice, that it ſhould be never wiped out until his Revenger came: Whatever Credit, I ſay, may be given to this Tradition, it was doubtleſs upon this Foundation that many of the Antients thought, that Zacharias, the Father of John the Baptiſt, was that Zachariah, Son of Barachiah, mentioned by our Saviour in the Goſpel, whoſe Blood was ſhed between the Temple and the Altar.

St. Luke, in particular, takes Notice, that the Time when our Lord's Forerunner was to be conceived, was in the Reign of Herod, Son of Antipater (for it was Herod Antipas that put him to Death) commonly called the Great, who, under the Romans, fought his Way to the Government of the Jews, and came to this Throne by the Slaughter of their Sanhedrim; by which Means he extinguiſhed all the Dominion, which till that Time, they held in the Tribe of Judah; not in a ſingle Perſon, indeed (for that was extinguiſhed in the Aſmonæan Family) but in a ſelect Number out of the royal Tribe; and ſo verified the Prophecy of old Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10. "That the Sceptre, or Government, was departed from Judah, and the Law giver from his Feet," which was a certain Sign that Shiloh, i. e. the Meſſiah, was ſhortly to come.

The ſeveral Courſes of the Prieſts begun on the Sabbath-day, and continued to ſerve till the Sabbath following; but, becauſe they were now increaſed to a greater Number (Joſephus tells us, that there was no leſs than a thouſand in each Courſe) there were ſeveral Parts of the prieſtly Office (whereof burning of Incenſe was one) which the Courſe, that then miniſtered, ſeems to have divided amongſt themſelves,

ſelves, for the Week that they were to attend.

A Jewiſh Congregation, for the moſt Part, conſiſting of all the Prieſts of the Courſe which was then in waiting of the Levites, and of certain ſtatuary Men, as they called them, who repreſented the Body of the People, beſides ſome other accidental Worſhippers; and when the Prieſt went into the Sanctuary, or into the firſt Veil, to offer Incenſe, Notice was given by the Sound of a Bell, that it was then the Time of Prayer, whereupon every one preſent offered up his Supplications to God ſilently: And though this ſilent Prayer was not commanded, yet there ſeems a manifeſt Alluſion to it, in thoſe Words of St. John, where, " at the offering of Incenſe with the Prayers of the Saints," it is ſaid, " there was Silence in Heaven for half an hour." Rev. viii. 1. &c. Nor is that Paſſage in Eccleſiaſticus, chap. l. 19, 20. any bad Repreſentation of this Part of the Jewiſh Worſhip, " and the People beſought the Lord, the moſt High, by Prayer, before him that is merciful, till the Solemnity of the Lord was ended; and then he went down (viz. Simon the High-Prieſt) and lifted up his Hands over the whole Congregation of the Children of Iſrael, to give the Bleſſing of the Lord with his Lips."

The Jews had a peculiar Notion, that ſuch like Apparitions as appeared to Zacharias in the Temple, were always fatal to thoſe that had them, and a ſure Token of their inſtantaneous Death, Gen. xvi. 13, 22, 30, Exod. xx. 19. &c. but if this were true, it is natural for Men to be affrighted at ſudden and unuſual Things, eſpecially at any divine Appearance, whether of God himſelf taking a viſible Shape, or authorizing an Angel to do ſo. For though God does not make the Appearances to affrighten us, yet ſuch is the Imbecility of our Nature, that we cannot but be ſtarted at them; and Reaſon good there is, that God, by this Means, ſhould both declare his own Glory and Majeſty, and humble his poor Creatures, in order to make them more ſuſceptible of his divine Revelation.

The Word Meſſiah is derived from the Hebrew, Maſhah, to anoint, and is the very ſame with anointed in Greek. It is a Name ſometimes given to the Kings and High-prieſts of the Hebrews, 1 Sam. xii. 5, &c. Pſal. cv. 15, but principally, and by way of Eminency, it belongs to that ſovereign Deliverer, who was expected by the Jews, and whom they vainly expect, even to this Day, ſince he is already come at the appointed Time, in the Perſon of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. The Jews were uſed to anoint Kings, High-prieſts, and ſometimes Prophets. Saul, David, Solomon, and Joaſh, Kings of Judah, received the royal Unction; Aaron and his Sons received the ſacerdotal; and Eliſha received the prophetical, at leaſt God ordered Elijah to give it to him. But now, though Jeſus Chriſt united in his own Perſon, all the Offices of Prophet, Prieſt and King, yet we no where find, that he received any outward or ſenſible Unction; and therefore the Unction, which the Prophets

phets and Apoſtles ſpeak of, with regard to him, is the ſpiritual and internal Unction of Grace and the Holy Ghoſt, of which the outward Unction was no more than a Figure and Symbol.

The Words of Zacharias to the Angel are, " Whereby ſhall I know this? For I am an old Man, and my Wife well ſtricken in Years," Luke i. 18. much of the ſame Import with thoſe of Abraham, upon a like Occaſion, " Whereby ſhall I know that I ſhall inherit the Land of Canaan?" Gen. xviii. 9. How then came it to paſs that Abraham was gratified with a ſign on the ſame Requeſt, for which Zacharias was puniſhed with loſs of Speech? Now though there may be a great Similitude in the Words, which are ſpoken by ſeveral Perſons, yet there may, at the ſame Time, be a very conſiderable Difference in the Heart and Habit of Mind, from whence they proceed, which we muſt allow God can ſee much better than we can perceive by Words. In relation to Abraham then, the Holy Spirit bears him Teſtimony, that " he ſtaggered not at the Promiſe through Unbelief, but was ſtrong in Faith, giving Glory to God, being fully perſuaded, that what he had promiſed he was able to perform," Rom. iv. 19. and therefore if he aſked a Sign, it was not to beget, but to nouriſh and confirm this Faith in him. But in Zacharias the aſking of a Sign ſavoured of perfect Infidelity, in that he believed not an Angel, appearing to him in the Name of the Lord, and in a Place where even Angels durſt not come: An Angel telling him " his Prayers were heard," which evil Angels could not know; and acquainting him with Things that tended to the Glory of God, the Completion of his Promiſes, and the Welfare of Mankind, which evil Angels would not do. His Puniſhment therefore was the juſt Reſult of his Unbelief; but (what ſhews the Mercy of God in inflicting it) it was a Puniſhment of ſuch a Nature, as carried with it an Anſwer to his Deſire, being no more than a Privation of Speech, until the Words of the Angel were fulfilled.

Let us now proceed in our Narrative, Six Month's after Elizabeth's Conception, the ſame Angel Gabriel was ſent to Nazareth, a City of Galilee, to a Virgin, named Mary, a near Relation to Elizabeth, and of the Houſe of David, who had lately been eſpouſed to one Joſeph, a Perſon of the ſame Pedigree, indeed, but of no higher Profeſſion than that of a Carpenter. The Angel approaching the pious Maid, began to congratulate her with " being highly in the Favour of God, and bleſſed above all the reſt of her Sex, becauſe ſhe ſhould have the Happineſs of bearing a Son, called by the Name of Jeſus or Saviour, the long expected Meſſiah, to whom God would give the Throne of his Father David, and of whoſe Sovereignty and Dominion there ſhould be no End."

Conſcious of her own Virtue, and yet ſurpriſed at this uncommon Appearance and Salutation, the holy Virgin began to expoſtulate with the heavenly Meſſenger, the Poſſibility of the Thing, ſince ſhe had all along lived in a ſtrict

a ſtrict State of Virginity: But the Angel to ſatisfy her in this Particular, told her, "That this wonderful Work was to be effected by the invifible Power and Operation of the Holy Ghoſt: and to ſhew her that nothing was impoſſible to the Almighty, gave her to underſtand, that her Couſin Elizabeth (notwithſtanding her old Age and former Sterility) had been now ſix Months with Child: Whereupon the holy Virgin humbly acquieſced in whatever God had determined to do with her, and as ſoon as the Angel was departed, made Preparations for her Journey to Hebron, where her Couſin Elizabeth lived.

As ſoon as ſhe arrived at Zachariah's Houſe, Elizabeth, upon hearing her firſt Salutation, perceived that the Child ſprang in her Womb, and being inſpired with the Holy Ghoſt, ſhe cried out, "Bleſſed art thou above thy Sex! Bleſſed is the Fruit of thy Body! And how great is my Felicity to be viſited by the Mother of my Lord!" And having, by the ſame prophetic Spirit, aſſured Mary of the Accompliſhment of every Thing that the Angel had told her, ſhe ſo tranſported the bleſſed Virgin, that ſhe broke out into a Rapture of Thankſgiving to God, wherein ſhe recounted his Mercies, and the Promiſes which he had made to the People of Iſrael, and which, by making her the bleſſed Inſtrument of them, he was now about to fulfil.

That we may rightly underſtand every Particular as we go on, let us conſider the following Obſervations.

Nazareth was a City of the Lower Galilee, ſituated in the South Part of that Province, and ſo not far from the Confines of Samaria to the South, and nearer to the Territories of Tyre and Sidon to the North-weſt. According to Mr. Maundrell's Account, in his Journey from Aleppo, it is at preſent only an inconſiderable Village, lying in a Kind of a round concave Valley, on the Top of an high Hill. Here is a Convent built over (what is ſaid to be) the Place of the Annunciation, or where the bleſſed Virgin received the joyful Meſſage brought her by the Angel. Here is likewiſe the Houſe of Joſeph, the very ſame (as the Friars of the Convent tell you) wherein the Son of God lived for near thirty Years in Subjection to Man; and not far from hence, they ſhew you the Synagogue wherein our bleſſed Saviour preached that Sermon, Luke iv. 16. whereby his Countrymen were ſo exaſperated, that they "roſe up and thruſt him out of the City, and led him to the Brow of the Hill, whereon their City was built, that they might caſt him down Headlong," Luke iv. 28, 29. for which Reaſon that Brow is, to this Day, called the Mountain of Precipitation.

"To a Virgin eſpouſed to a Man, whoſe Name was Joſeph, of the Houſe of David;" which Words, in my Opinion, might be placed in this Manner, —To a Virgin of the Houſe of David; eſpouſed to a Man, whoſe Name was Joſeph, and the Virgin's Name was Mary; becauſe this agrees better with the Words of the Angel, "The Lord God ſhall give him the Throne of his Father

Father David." For, ſince the Angel had plainly told the Virgin, that ſhe ſhould have this Son without the Knowledge of any Man, it was not Joſeph's, but Mary's being of the Houſe of David, that made David his Father. Of her immediate Parents, however, the Scripture tells us nothing, not ſo much as their Names; but from Tradition we learn, that ſhe was the Daughter of Joachim and Anna, of the royal Tribe of Judah, and yet related to the Race of Aaron, becauſe Elizabeth, the Wife of Zacharias, was her Couſin.

Eſpouſing or betrothing was nothing elſe but a ſolemn Promiſe of Marriage, made by two Perſons, to each other, at ſuch a Diſtance of Time as they agreed upon. The Manner of performing this Eſpouſal was either by a Writing, or by a Piece of Silver given to the Bride, or by Cohabitation. The Writing that was prepared on theſe Occaſions, ran in this Form: On ſuch a Day of ſuch a Month, in ſuch a Year, A, the Son of A, has ſaid to B, the Daughter of B, Be thou my Spouſe, according to the Law of Moſes and the Iſraelites, and I will give thee, for the Portion of Virginity, the Sum of two hundred Zuzims, as it is ordained by the Law. And the ſaid B. has conſented to become his Spouſe upon theſe Conditions, which the ſaid A has promiſed to perform upon the Day of Marriage. To this the ſaid A obliges himſelf; and for this he engages all his Goods, even as far as the Cloak which he wears upon his Shoulder. Moreover he promiſes to perform all that is intended in Contracts of Marriage, in Favour of the Iſraelitiſh Women. Witneſſes, A, B, C. The Promiſe by a Piece of Silver, and without Writing, was made before Witneſs; when the young Man ſaid to his Miſtreſs, Receive this Piece of Silver as a Pledge that you ſhall become my Spouſe. Laſtly, the Engagement by Cohabitation (according to the Rabbins) was allowed by Law, Deut. xxiv. 1. but it had been wiſely forbidden by the Ancients, becauſe of the Abuſes that might happen, and to prevent the Inconvenience of clandeſtine Marriages. After ſuch Eſpouſal was made (which was generally when the Parties were young) the Woman continued with her Parents ſeveral Months, if not ſome Years (at leaſt till ſhe was arrived at the Age of Puberty) before ſhe was brought home, and her Marriage conſummated: For ſo we find that Sampſon's Wife remained with her Parent's a conſiderable Time after Eſpouſal, Judg. xiv. 15. and that the bleſſed Virgin was diſcernibly with Child before ſhe and her intended Huſband came together, Matt. i. 18. Whether this Method of betrothing was at firſt ordained, or only approved by God, Deut. xx. 7. or whether it be now of any Obligation to us Chriſtians, we ſhall not pretend to determine. It is certain that it has nothing that is typical, nothing of the carnal Ordinance in it, but ſomething very proper and convenient, viz. that the Parties contracted may have ſome intermediate Time to think ſeriouſly of the great Change they are going to make in their Condition; to diſcourſe more freely

freely together about their domeſtick Affairs; and to implore God's Bleſſing and Protection over them and theirs, in all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life.

We read of but few Inſtances in Scripture, where Men had Names determined for them, by particular Appointments from Heaven, and before the Time of their Birth, as was that of our Saviour Jeſus; and as ſuch Names appear to be very ſignificant, ſo the Perſons diſtinguiſhed by them, were always remarkable for ſome extraordinary Qualities or Events, which their reſpective Names were deſigned to denote. Our Lord's Name, indeed, in Senſe and Subſtance, is the ſame with Joſhua, that famous Leader heretofore, who after the Death of Moſes ſettled the Iſraelites in the Promiſed Land, and ſubdued the Enemies that oppoſed their Entrance into it. But as that earthly was a Figure of the heavenly Canaan, ſo was the Captain of That, an eminent Type of our Salvation; and, if he was worthy to be called a Saviour, much more is this Jeſus, what his Name imports; for he delivers us from the heavieſt of all Bondages, and from the moſt formidable of all Enemies, as he, and he only it is, who ſaves his People from their Sins.

The Prophets, in their Predictions, are very full and expreſs, that the Meſſiah ſhould be a great King, and deſcend from the Line of David; ſee Pſal. xi. 7. Iſaiah ix. 6, 7. Dan. vii. 14. and Ezek. xx. 27, and therefore the Angel, in his Meſſage to Mary, characteriſes him, as a Succeſſor to that Prince's Throne, and ſeems to accommodate himſelf, in ſome Meaſure, to the Prejudice of the Jews, and perhaps of the Virgin-Mother herſelf, who being bred up in the Synagogue, might expect that the Meſſiah ſhould be a temporal Prince, as well as they. But our Lord's Kingdom (as himſelf plainly declares) " is not of this World," nor of the like Nature with other Empires upon Earth. His Reign is in the Hearts and Minds of Men; and his Dominion is in the Church, againſt which " the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail," and in which, " of the Increaſe of his Government and Peace there ſhall be no End," Iſaiah ix. 7. " until the End cometh, when he ſhall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 24.

Mary's Expoſtulation is, " How ſhall this be, ſeeing I know not Man? Which ſome look upon as no more than a Reply of Admiration, and a Deſire to be further informed in what Manner God intended to effect ſuch a wonderful Work; though others perceive in them ſome Indications of Diffidence, but that might be the more excuſable, becauſe there had been no ſuch Precedent of the Divine Power made in the World, as to cauſe a " Virgin to conceive and bring forth a Son."

Some are of Opinion, that Mary, very early in her Life, had made a Vow of perpetual Chaſtity, and that Joſeph was appointed her Huſband, not to live with her in the ordinary Uſe of Marriage, but meerly, to be the Guardian of her Virginity: But beſides that no Vows of perpetual Virginity were

ever in Uſe among the Jews, it can hardly be ſuppoſed that a Jewiſh Woman, in whom Barrenneſs was reputed a Reproach, and looked upon as a Curſe, would be ever induced to make one. Among the Precepts of the Law, the Jewiſh Doctors account Matrimony to be one, Gen. i. 28. from which none are exempted, but they, who devote themſelves wholly to the Study of the Law: but, ſince this was not the Bleſſed Virgin's Caſe, it reflects a Diſhonour upon her Memory to imagine, that after ſhe had entered into ſuch a Vow, ſhe ſhould admit of an Eſpouſal to Joſeph, which could be for no other End but merely to mock him.

" The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the Power of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee," wherein, according to the uſual Modeſty of Scripture Language, is implied all that Action of the Holy Ghoſt, whereby the Bleſſed Virgin was enabled to become fruitful, and the Place of ordinary Generation was, in this Caſe, ſupplied. Now when this Action is in the Scripture repreſented as entirely the Work of God, and yet is attributed to the Holy Ghoſt in particular, we are not to underſtand it ſo peculiarly his, that the other two Perſons ſubſiſting in the Godhead, ſhould have no Concern in it; for here that Rule of the Schools takes Place, that the entire Union of the Divine Nature makes all ſuch Actions common to all three, as do not refer to the Properties and Relations, by which they ſtand diſtinguiſhed from each other. As therefore the Holy Spirit began the firſt Creation, by moving (or brooding as it were) upon the Face of the Waters, ſo did he here begin the new Creation, by conveying a Principle, or Power of Fruitfulneſs into a Perſon, otherwiſe incapable of it: And yet, as there without the Father and his divine Word, or Son, " was not any Thing made, that was made," John i. 3. ſo did he here bring this ſecond, " this Creation of a new Thing," Jer. xxxi. 22. to Effect, by the ſame Cooperation of the whole undivided Trinity, as he had done the former.

Hebron very probably was the Place where Zacharias and Elizabeth lived, and where John the Baptiſt was born, becauſe it was not only one of the Cities appointed for the Prieſts to dwell in, Joſh. xx. 7. but ſituated likewiſe in Mountains, which running croſs the Middle of Judea from South to North, gave to the Tract, which they run along, the Name of the Hill-Country. Hebron was ten Leagues diſtant from Jeruſalem, and about forty from Nazareth, which made it a long Journey for the Bleſſed Virgin, had not her Zeal to go and partake in her Couſin's Joy (more than to ſatisfy her Curioſity, whether what the Angel had told her was true) made her ſurmount all Difficulties.

It is ſaid, indeed, of the Baptiſt, that he " ſhould be filled with the Holy Ghoſt from his Mother's Womb" and from hence ſome have thought, that this extraordinary Motion of the Child in Elizabeth, was an Act of his own, and proceeded from a Senſation of Joy, which himſelf felt at the Salutation of the Bleſſed Virgin: But, beſides that,

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"being filled with the Holy Ghoſt from his Mother's Womb," means no more than that the Power of the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be diſcerned to be upon him very early. It is certain, that Infants in the Womb are not capable of any Joy themſelves, as having no Apprehenſions of Good to be enjoyed, or Evil to be avoided; but as they are ſenſibly affected with the Joy, or Grief, or Surprize of the Parent, to whom they are united, the uncommon Motions of the Child, at this Conjuncture, muſt be occaſioned by the Joy which tranſported his Mother.

It was cuſtomary among the Jews, for pious and devout Perſons, when they found themſelves inſpired, upon great and ſolemn Occaſions to celebrate the Praiſes of God, in Songs made on Purpoſe. Several of this Kind we meet with in the Old Teſtament, but this of the Bleſſed Virgin is the firſt that occurs in the New, and for the Majeſty of its Stile, the Nobleneſs of its Sentiments, and that Spirit of Piety, which runs through the whole, is inferior to none.

About three Months Mary continued with her Couſin Elizabeth, and then returned home. Elizabeth, not long after, was delivered of a Son; but on the eighth Day, when the Child was to be circumciſed and named, his Relations and Friends were not a little ſurprized to hear that he was to be called John, ſince none of the Family bore that Name; but their Surprize became much greater, when they found that upon this Occaſion, his Father's Speech was immediately reſtored to him, which he employed in the Praiſes of Almighty God, who had wrought ſuch Prodigies among them.

The Holy Virgin being returned to Nazareth, ſtill concealed the Myſtery, which God had wrought in her, from her eſpouſed Huſband, but her pregnant Symptoms ſoon diſcovered it; and though her Deportment had been extremely chaſte and modeſt, yet he might be well aſſured that ſhe was with Child. This raiſed no little Concern in his Breaſt; but, being a merciful good Man, and unwilling, either to expoſe the Honour of her Family, which he thought ſhe had ſtained, or to inflict publick Puniſhment upon her, according to the Sentence of the Law, he reſolved upon a Separation with the utmoſt Privacy: But before he came to put it into Execution, an Angel from Heaven appeared to him in a Viſion, informing him, "That his Wife's Conception was the immediate Work of the Holy Ghoſt, and that ſhe ſhould bear a Son, the ſame Perſon, whom the Prophet had foretold under the Name of Emanuel, or God with us." Whereupon Joſeph was not diſobedient to the heavenly Viſion, but taking the Holy Virgin home to him, he lived with her, to all outward Appearance, in conjugal Love, though he certainly had no carnal Knowledge of her, till ſhe was delivered of her firſt-born Son, who, by a lineal Deſcent, was true Heir to the Kingdom of Iſrael, as ſprung from the Houſe of David.

The Jews had a poſitive Command in their Law, that no Child ſhould be circumciſed before the eighth Day, be-

cauſe the Mother, for ſeven Days was reputed unclean, and ſo was the Child by touching her, Levit. xii. 1, 2. but the Law appointed no certain Place, in which Circumciſion was to be done, nor any certain Perſon that was to perform it; neither did it injoin that the Child ſhould have his Name given him at that Time, only the Cuſtom prevailed of doing it then, becauſe when God inſtituted the Rite, he changed the Names of Abraham and Sarah.

The Jews, from the firſt Beginning, ſeem to have made it a Point of Religion, to give ſuch Names to their Children, as were very ſignificative either of God's Mercy to them, or of their Duty to God; and from the Paſſage now before us (though it was no antient Uſage) it ſeems to be a Cuſtom introduced, at leaſt in the Days of Zacharias, to call Children by the Name of their Parents, or the neareſt Relations (as it is uſual now among us) if there was no particular Reaſon to the contrary.

The Words in the Text, as we tranſlate them, are,—Joſeph her Huſband being a juſt Man: But if he was a juſt Man, and was ſatisfied that his intended Wife had, ſome Way or other, violated her Chaſtity (as he knew nothing to the contrary at that Time) inſtead of ſcreening her Crime, he ought to have brought her to Puniſhment, Deut. xxii. 20, 21. Now it is to be obſerved, that upon the Diſcovery of his Wife's Pregnancy, Joſeph had the Choice of three Things; 1ſt, Either he might, notwithſtanding this, have taken her to his Houſe, as his Wife, becauſe the Law of Divorce laid none under an Obligation, but gave a Permiſſion only, in caſe of ſome diſcovered Uncleanneſs, to put away the Wife: Or 2dly, He might give her a bill of Divorcement, either in public or in private (for that was left to his Option) either before two or three Witneſſes, or before a proper Magiſtrate and that without ſpecifying any Crime againſt her, Or 3dly, He might, according to the Law, have brought her upon her Trial, whether, in the Matter of her Pregnancy, ſhe had ſuffered a Rape, or was herſelf conſenting, Deut. xxii. 23, 24 Had therefore Joſeph done the firſt of theſe, he muſt have acted contrary to his own Honour, and have incurred the common Reproach, that he, who retained an Adultreſs, is a Fool. Had he done the laſt of theſe, he was not ſure of convicting her, becauſe upon examination, it might appear that ſhe had been forced; and, in that Caſe, the Man that did it was to die, Deut. xxii. 25. or ſhe might have been with Child before her betrothing, and, in that Caſe, ſhe was only obliged to marry the Perſon that had abuſed her, ver. 28, 29. Upon the whole, therefore, Joſeph thought it the beſt and juſteſt Way to proceed upon the Foot of a Divorce. Mary's being viſibly with Child, was Reaſon ſufficient to authorize his parting with her: But he did not know for certain, that ſhe was guilty of Adultery, or that conſequently ſhe deſerved to die; and therefore he did not think it right, by bringing her upon her Trial, to expoſe her.

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The Common Way of Seperation among the Jews was, by the Man's giving the Woman a Letter of Divorce. This, in their Language, is called Gheth, and the Subſtance of it is to this Effect. On ſuch a Day, Month, and Year, and at ſuch a Place, I, A, divorce you voluntarily, put you away, and reſtore you to your Liberty, even you B, who was heretofore my Wife, and I permit you to marry whom you pleaſe. When the Day of Divorce comes, the Rabbi, that attends, having ſtrictly examined both Parties, and finding that they are reſolved to part, bids the Woman open her Hands, and when ſhe has received the Deed, cloſe them both together, leſt it ſhould chance to fall to the Ground. The Man, when he gives her the Parchment (for on Parchment the Bill of Divorce was to be wrote in the Preſence of two Rabbins, and with many other trifling Circumſtances) tells her, Here is thy Divorce; I put thee away from me, and leave thee at Liberty to marry whom thou pleaſeſt; and when the Woman has taken it, and the Rabbi reads it over once more, ſhe is entirely free. There is in this Ceremony however, to be remarked, that they always endeavour to have ten or twelve Perſons at it, beſides the two Witneſſes, who ſign the Deed. When therefore Joſeph intended to diſmiſs Mary privately, it could not be by having no Witneſſes at all, but as few as the Nature of the Thing would bear, and by giving her the Letter of Divorcement into her own Hand, which ſhe might ſuppreſs, if ſhe thought fit, or by inſerting no Accuſation againſt her in it, in Caſe it came to be read before the Company.

This Viſion was in a Dream, and while he was aſleep, and Dreams, we know, were one Way whereby God revealed his Mind to People formerly, Job. xxxiv. 14, 15. whereby he made himſelf known to the Prophets, Numb. xii. 6. and not to Prophets only, but to Pagan Princes ſometimes, as appears by the Inſtances both of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, Gen. xli. 1. Dan. ii. 1. But how to diſtinguiſh divine from natural Dreams, it is difficult to ſay, unleſs it be by the clear and diſtinct Series of their Repreſentation, and the forceable Impreſſion which they leave upon Mens Spirits; whereas natural Dreams, for the moſt Part, are rambling and inconſiſtent, and "whoſo regardeth them (ſays the wiſe Son of Sirach) is like him who catched at a Shadow, or followeth after the Wind," Eccleſ. xxxiv. 2.

The Word Firſt-born, in Scripture, admits of various Significations: Sometimes (and moſt commonly indeed) it denotes the eldeſt of two or more Children, as Eliab is called the Firſt-born of Jeſſe, 1 Sam. xvii. 13. at other times, the firſt that is born, without Regard to any elſe; as when God ſays to Moſes, Sanctify me all the Firſt-born, Exod. xiii. 2. In ſome Places it imports figuratively what is moſt dearly beloved by us; in which Senſe God frequently calls the Iſraelites his Firſt-born; and in others, what is moſt remarkable for Greatneſs or Excellency, as God promiſes David (who was but a younger

younger Brother of the Family) to make him the Firſt-born of the Kings of the Earth, Pſal. lxxxix. 28. In any of theſe three laſt Senſes, our Saviour might very properly be called his Mother's firſt-born Son, for as much as he was really her firſt Child; her moſt, and only beloved, and the moſt illuſtrious of his Race: But then Joſeph's not knowing his Wife until ſhe was delivered of her firſt-born Son, ſeems to imply, that he knew her afterwards. Thoſe who maintain the perpetual Virginity of the Bleſſed Mother, tell us, that the Greek words which we render until, in ſeveral Places of Scripture, has Relation only to the Time which precedes, and not to that which follows any Event; ſo that, he knew her not until, may be taken in the ſame Senſe, as Samuel came not to ſee Saul till the Day of his Death. 1 Sam. xv, 35. i. e. he never came to ſee him: But (beſides that moſt of the Paſſages, which are produced to this Purpoſe, are far from coming up to the Caſe in Hand) ſince the Angel commanded Joſeph to take Mary as his Wife, without any Intimation, that he ſhould not perform the Duty of an Huſband to her, it is not eaſy to conceive, why he ſhould live twelve Years with her, and all that while deny that Duty, which both the Law and the Canons of the Jews command the Huſband to pay his Wife, Exod. xxi. 10. If we imagine, that our Saviour would have been diſhonoured in any other's lying in the ſame Bed after him, we ſeem to forget, how much he humbled and debaſed himſelf, in lying in that Bed firſt, and then in a Stable, and a Manger. But, leaving this Queſtion to thoſe, who affect to be curious beyond what is written, we may ſafely conclude with St. Baſil,——That though it was neceſſary for the Completion of the Prophecy, that the Mother of our Lord ſhould continue a Virgin, until ſhe had brought forth her Firſt-born; yet, what ſhe was afterwards, it is idle to diſcuſs, becauſe it is of no manner of Concern to the Myſtery.

But let us proceed in our Hiſtory. Some Time before the Birth of Chriſt, Auguſtus Cæſar had iſſued out a general Edict, that all Perſons in the Roman Empire, with their Eſtates and Conditions, ſhould be regiſtered at certain appointed Places, according to their reſpective Provinces, Cities and Families. By Virtue of this Edict, Joſeph and his Wife Mary, being both of the Tribe of Judah, and Family of David, were obliged to go as far as Bethlehem, which was the Mother-City of their Tribe, there to have their Names and Eſtates enrolled. The great Conflux of People, upon this Occaſion, had already filled all the Inns, and Houſes of Reception, ſo that no better Place could be found for their Lodging, than a Stable, where they had not been long, before the Bleſſed Virgin was delivered of a Son, whom (herſelf performing the Office of a Midwife) ſhe bound in Swaddling Clothes, and laid down to reſt in a Manger. But, notwithſtanding this Obſcurity of our Saviour's Birth, God was pleaſed, that very Night, by the Meſſage of an Angel, with a radiant Light

Light ſurrounding him, to make a pompous Revelation of it to certain poor Shepherds, who were attending their Flocks on the Plains of Bethlehem; and, after one Angel had delivered the joyful Tidings, an innumerable Company of the ſame celeſtial Choir, broke out all together into this triumphant Doxology, " Glory be to God on high, Peace on Earth, and Good-will towards Men."

No ſooner was this heavenly Concert ended, but the over-joyed Shepherds, remembering the Signs which the Angel, before he diſappeared, had given them, immediately haſtened to Bethlehem, where they found the Virgin-Mother, and Joſeph the ſuppoſed Father, attending the god-like Babe, whom, in humble Reverence, they adored, and then returned, praiſing and extolling the Mercies of God, and, to the great Amazement of all that heard them, publiſhing, in all Places, what they knew concerning this Child.

The following Notes will explain what is difficult in the preceding Relation.

Bethlehem, where our Saviour was born (for there was another City of the ſame Name in the Tribe of Zabulon) is ſituated on the Declivity of an Hill, in the Tribe of Judah, two Leagues diſtant from Jeruſalem, and near thirty from Nazareth; ſo that we might juſtly wonder, how the Bleſſed Virgin, big with Child as ſhe was, could be able to take ſo long a Journey on Foot (for we hear of no other Voiture that ſhe had) were it not preſumable, that the Child, which ſhe conceived without Loſs of her Virginity, ſhe might be enabled to carry without the Senſe of any Load, or Uneaſineſs. What might poſſibly be the Motive of her taking ſuch a Journey, is not ſo well accounted for, by pretending that ſhe was an Heireſs, and the ſole Relict of her Family, which, upon this Occaſion, ſhe was obliged to repreſent; as it is by ſaying, that this was done by the eſpecial Providence and Appointment of God, who ordered this Enrolment (which Auguſtus intended to have had done before) to be delayed to this very Time, and then inſtigated the Bleſſed Virgin to accompany her Huſband, that ſo Chriſt might be born in Bethlehem, according to the Prediction of the Prophet, Micah v. 2. and that his Lineage and Family might, at that Time, be known and preſerved in the publick Tables. The Birth indeed of our Bleſſed Saviour (more than its Extent or Riches) has made Bethlehem, ever ſince, a Place of high Renown, which is generally viſited by Pilgrims, and at preſent is furniſhed not only with a Convent of the Latins, but alſo with one of the Greeks, and another of the Armenians. Here are ſhewn you the very Place where our Saviour was born, the Manger in which he was laid, and the Cave or Grott in which the Bleſſed Virgin hid herſelf, and her Divine Babe, from the Malice of Herod, for ſome Time, before their Departure into Egypt. Here are ſhewn you likewiſe the Chapel of St. Joſeph, the ſuppoſed Father of our Lord; the Chapel of the Innocents, as alſo thoſe of St. Jerom, St. Paula, and Euſtochium.

um. About half a Mile Eaſtward of the Town, you ſee the Field where the Shepherds were watching their Flocks, when they received the glad Tidings of the Birth of Chriſt, and, not far from the Field, the Village where they dwelt.

The Inns in the Eaſt are, even to this Day, large ſquare Buildings, but generally no more than one Story high, with a ſpacious Court in the middle of them. Into this Court you enter at a wide Gate, and, on the Right and Left-hand, meet with Rooms, that are appointed for Travellers to lodge in: Thoſe that come firſt take the Rooms they like beſt, but muſt be mindful to provide themſelves both with Bedding and Victuals, becauſe the Rooms are perfectly naked, and have no Furniture in them. It is ſome Comfort however, that, for your Lodging (ſuch as it is) will pay nothing, only a ſmall Toll to the Town, as you paſs along; and have no Reaſon to fear the Loſs of any Thing you bring with you, becauſe the Maſter of the Inn takes great Care of the Gate at Night, and is indeed reſponſible for the Safety of whatever Baggage you carry into your Lodging.

The Office of Midwife, which the holy Virgin herſelf performed, ſhe could not have done, to be ſure, had ſhe been delivered in the common Manner of other Women: But it was always the Opinion of the Church from the Days of Gregory Nazianzen, until now (though before his Days there were ſome Opinions to the contrary) that, as there was no Sin in the Conception, ſo neither had the Virgin any Pains in the Production; for to her alone the Puniſhment of Eve, that "in Sorrow ſhe ſhould bring forth Children," did not extend, becauſe where nothing of Sin was the Ingredient, there nothing of Miſery could cohabit.

Let us now go on with our Narrative. As ſoon as the Child was eight Days old, his Parents had him circumciſed according to the Law; when, purſuant to the Order which the Angel had given before his Conception, they called his Name Jeſus; and, as ſoon as he was forty Days old, two other Ceremonies were performed, viz. the Purification of his Mother, and the Preſentation of her Firſt-born. Though therefore her Son's immaculate Conception needed not that Ceremony, yet the holy Virgin went up with Joſeph to Jeruſalem, there to offer the Sacrifices preſcribed by the Law for her Purification, and there to preſent her Son to the Lord, by delivering him into the Prieſt's Hands, and redeeming him again for five Shekels. But while ſhe was in the Temple performing this, old Simeon, who had long waited for the Redemption of Iſrael, and had been promiſed, by the Mouth of Heaven, that he ſhould not leave this World, before he had ſeen the illuſtrious Perſon who was to effect it, came in, and taking the bleſſed Infant into his Arms, in an heavenly Extaſy praiſed God for the Completion of his Promiſes, in letting him live to ſee the Saviour of the World, before he quitted it: And no ſooner had he ended his divine Rapture, but an ancient Widow

dow of the Tribe of Aſer, whoſe Name was Anna, and whoſe Piety and Devotion, Severity of Life, and conſtant Frequentation of the publick Worſhip, were very remarkable, coming into the Temple, and being herſelf likewiſe excited by a prophetic Spirit, gave God Thanks for his infinite Mercies; teſtifying that this Child was the true Meſſiah, and declaring the ſame to all ſuch devout Perſons in Jeruſalem, as waited for his Coming.

After theſe legal Performances, and ſolemn Teſtimonies in Favour of the Child, Joſeph and Mary returned to Bethlehem, where, in a very ſhort Time, they were viſited by certain Strangers, coming from afar, of a Rank and Character ſomewhat extraordinary. For God, to notify the Birth of his Son to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, cauſed an uncommon Star to ariſe in the Eaſt, which ſome Wiſemen, or Aſtronomers, in thoſe Parts obſerving, and underſtanding withal, that this was to ſignify the Birth of the Meſſiah promiſed to the Jews, travelled to the Metropolis of Judea, there enquiring after this new-born Prince, that they might teſtify their Homage and Adoration of him. Their publick Character and Appearance, and their openly calling him the "King of the Jews," put Herod into a great Conſternation, and the whole City indeed into no ſmall Commotion, as both fearing, and hoping ſomething extraordinary.

Herod, however, being reſolved to deſtroy this ſuppoſed Rival in his Kingdom, immediately aſſembled the whole Body of the Sanhedrim, and demanded of them the very Place, where the Meſſiah ſhould be born. Bethlehem, in the Land aſſigned to the Tribe of Judah," they told him," was the very Spot, which the holy Spirit, by the Prophet Micah, had marked out for this great Event; which when he underſtood, he diſmiſſed the Aſſembly, and ſending for the above-mentioned Aſtrologers, with the utmoſt Secrecy, enquired of them the exact Time of the Star's firſt Appearance, and then diſmiſſed them to Bethlehem, with Orders, to make diligent Search for the young Prince, and, when they had diſcovered where he was, to bring him Word to Jeruſalem, that he, in like Manner, might go and pay him his Homage. But this Pretence of Worſhipping, was no more than a Cloak to his Intention of Killing the Child.

Theſe Perſons however, having received the King's Inſtructions, departed towards Bethlehem, and, in their Way, were very agreeably ſurpriſed with a new Sight of the ſame miraculous Star, they had ſeen in their own Country, which went before them, and (like the fiery Pillar in the Wilderneſs) directed them to the very Houſe, where Jeſus and his Mother abode. As ſoon as they entered in, they fell proſtrate on the Ground, according to the Eaſtern Cuſtom, and, having in this Manner adored the Child, preſented him with the richeſt Products of their Country, Gold, and precious Odours, more particularly Frankincenſe, and Myrrh.

Having thus performed their Homage and Congratulations, theſe Eaſtern

ern Strangers were thinking of nothing more than to return to Jeruſalem, and acquaint Herod with the happy Diſcovery they had made; but God, who knew the heart of that Tyrant, prevented them by a Viſion that very Night, which directed them into their own Country another Way; and, not long after ſent an Angel to Joſeph, to acquaint him with Herod's intended Cruelty againſt the Child, and to order him to retire into Egypt, with him, and his Mother, and there to continue, till farther Notice; which Joſeph inſtantly obeyed, and, for fear of Diſcovery, taking the Advantage of the Night, with all poſſible Speed ſet forward for Egypt.

In the mean Time Herod waited impatiently for the Return of the Eaſtern Sages; but at length finding himſelf deluded, and his moſt ſecret and ſubtle Deſigns blaſted, he fell into a moſt violent Rage and Fury; and, having reſolved to effect by Cruelty what he had been diſappointed of doing by Policy he ſent out his Soldiers, and made a bloody Maſſacre of all the Children in the City of Bethlehem, and the neighbouring Towns, that were two Years of Age, and under, including herein the whole Time, and more, that the Wiſemen had told him, and not doubting, but that, in this general Slaughter, he ſhould diſpatch the young Prince, whom he ſo much dreaded: But God had provided him with a ſafe Retreat. The Shrieks, however, of tender Mothers for their innocent Babes, and the Groans of expiring Infants, which on this occaſion filled the Skies, were inexpreſſible, and were one Reaſon, doubtleſs, why the divine Vengeance, not long after, overtook this Tyrant, and ſmote him with a ſtrange and terrible Diſtemper, which put an End to his wicked and brutal Life.

Before his Death, he had, by Will (which in ſome meaſure Auguſtus confirmed) ſettled his Dominions upon his Sons, and his Siſter. Archelaus he had made his Succeſſor in that Part of his Kingdom which included Judea, Idumea and Samaria: To Philip he had given Auronitis, Trachonitis, Panea, and Batanea: To Herod Antipas, Galilee, and Peræa; and to his Siſter Salome, ſome particular Cities, with a conſiderable Sum of Money. After his Death therefore (which was notified to Joſeph by a Viſion) God ordered him to return, with the Child and his Mother, into the Land of Iſrael, which Joſeph readily obeyed; but when he arrived in Judea, hearing that Archelaus ſucceeded Herod in that Part of the Country, and being apprehenſive that the Cruelty and Ambition of the Father might be entailed upon the Son, he feared to ſettle there; and therefore, being directed by God in another Viſion, he retired into the Dominions of his Brother Herod Antipas, in Galilee, to his former Habitation in Nazareth, where the ſtrange Occurrences of our Lord's Birth were not ſo well known. After this, we have no certain account either of him, or his Parents, only that they annually repaired with him to Jeruſalem at the Paſſover; and that, as is Body increaſed

creaſed in Stature, ſo, more eſpecially, the Faculties of his Soul were enlarged, being highly repleniſhed with Wiſdom, and the Grace of God.

In the mean Time Archelaus, following the Steps of his Father, made himſelf ſo odious to the Jews, that the principal Men among them, joining with thoſe of Samaria, made a public Complaint of him to Auguſtus, who, upon a full Hearing, both of his Crimes, and Vindication, deprived him of his Government, confiſcated all his Goods, baniſhed him to Vienna, a City in Gaul, and reduced his Dominions to the Form of a Roman Province, which, for ever after, was ruled by a Governor ſent from Rome, who was called by the Name of Procurator, but in ſome Caſes, was ſubject to the Preſident, or Governor of Syria.

Our bleſſed Lord, as he was the ſupreme Lawgiver of the World, was not, in Strictneſs, bound to the Obſervation of his own Law, nor did he ſtand in any Need of Circumciſion, conſidered as a Remedy againſt original Sin, becauſe in his Incarnation, he had contracted no Pollution; but as he was made of a Woman, made under the Law, and came (as himſelf teſtifies, Mat. iii. 15.) to fulfil all Righteouſneſs, it became him to receive the Character, which diſtinguiſhed the Jews from all other Nations. Among the Jews indeed it was thought a Reproach to keep Company with Perſons, that were not circumciſed, "Thou wenteſt in to Men uncircumciſed, and didſt eat with them." is the Accuſation, which they brought againſt St. Peter, Acts xi. 3. and therefore, as our Lord was ſent chiefly to the loſt Sheep of Iſrael, he could not have been qualified for their Acceptance and free Converſation, had he not ſubmitted to this Ordinance. Of him was that moſt glorious of all the Promiſes made to Abraham intended, "In thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed," Gal. iii. 16. And therefore fit it was, that he ſhould have the Seal or Teſtimony of Circumciſion, in order to ſhew, that he was truly and rightly deſcended of that Anceſtor; and, as he was come to be the Mediator of a new and better Covenant, it was but decent, that the former ſhould recede with Honour, and that it might do ſo, himſelf ſhould approve of a Sacrament, which was both of divine Inſtitution, and a Means of Admiſſion into that former Covenant.

The Law concerning the Purification of Women, we have in the twelfth Chapter of Leviticus, wherein it is ordained, that a Woman, after bearing of Children, ſhould continue, for a certain Number of Days, in a State, which the Law termed unclean. For the ſeven firſt Days, all Converſation or Contract polluted them, that approached her, and for three and thirty Days more (which in all amount to forty) ſhe was ſtill though in an inferior Degree) reputed unclean; but at the Expiration of this Term, if her Child was a Son (for the Time was double for a Daughter) ſhe was commanded to bring a Burnt-offering, and a Sin-offering, which wiped out the Stain, which the Law had laid upon

her, and reſtored her to all the Purity and Privileges ſhe had before. Now though the miraculous Conception of the Bleſſed Virgin, ſet her quite above any Obligation to the Law of Impurity, yet ſince her being a Mother was ſufficiently known, though the Manner of her being ſo, was a Secret, it was fit, that ſhe ſhould ſubmit, as the known Mother of a Son, to the Ceremonies expected from her. Her Sin-offering was not indeed due in any Senſe, but ſhe lay under the ſame legal Incapacity, in the Eye of the World, as other Women did, and was to be reſtored, to the Temple by it. Her Burnt-offering was not due, as that of other Parents is, to commemorate a Deliverance from Pangs and Dangers; but never ſure were Thanks ſo juſtly due for any Son, as this; never from any Mother, as from her, who had the Honour to bring forth her own, and the World's Saviour, the Bleſſing and Expectation of all the Earth. As therefore he was circumciſed in his own Perſon, though the myſtical and moral Part of Circumciſion had nothing to do with him: So his Mother ſubmitted to all the Purifications, of any other Iſraelitiſh Woman, though ſhe partook not in any Degree of the Infirmities, and Pollutions common to other Births.

What the Bleſſed Virgin offered, we read, was a Pair of Turtles, which being the Oblation appointed only for the meaner Sort of People, Lev. xii. 6, 8. diſcovers the Poverty of Joſeph and Mary, that they could not reach to a Lamb of the firſt Year, the Offering, which they, who had Ability, were obliged to make.

Some are of Opinion that this Simeon was the Son and Succeſſor of Hillel, a very famous Doctor in the Jewiſh Church, before our Saviour's Time, and that he was either the Father or Maſter of Gamaliel, at whoſe Feet St. Paul was educated. But beſides that we can hardly ſuppoſe, how a Perſon of this Note could make ſo publick a Declaration in Favour of our Lord, and yet no more Notice be taken of it; if we look into the ſeveral Revelations, which God, at this Time, was pleaſed to give of his Son, we ſhall find that none of them were directed to any of the Phariſees, or principal Doctors of the Law, but that to Joſeph a Carpenter, to Zacharias an ordinary Prieſt, and to a Company of poor Shepherds, ſuch Diſcoveries were made; and therefore it is much more reaſonable to preſume, that this Simeon, to whom God had revealed the Time of Chriſt's Coming, was ſome honeſt plain Man, more remarkable for his Piety and Devotion, than any other Quality or Accompliſhment. When he came into the Temple, 'tis ſaid, that among the other Mothers, who brought their Children to be preſented to the Lord, he obſerved the holy Virgin all ſhining with Rays of Light, and that, putting the Multitude aſide, he went directly to her, gave her his Bleſſing, took the Child Jeſus in his Arms, and, being divinely inſpired, pronounced the Canticle, Nunc dimittis. Nicephorus relates, that, as ſoon as he returned the Child to his Mother,

Mother, he died; and Epiphanius adds, that the Hebrew Prieſts refuſed to give him Burial, becauſe he had ſpoken of our Saviour with too much Advantage. But theſe Traditions may be groundleſs Fictions.

"When they had performed all Things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own City Nazareth," Luke ii. 39. which muſt be interpreted of ſome Time, at leaſt, after they had performed theſe Things. For, upon Suppoſition, that the Wiſe-men came to Bethlehem, after that Joſeph and Mary had been at Jeruſalem with the Child; upon the Child's Return from thence, his Parents muſt have taken Bethlehem in their Way, and there made ſome ſmall Stay (in which Time we ſuppoſe that the Wiſe-men came) before they departed to the Place of their ſettled Abode: Becauſe the other two Suppoſitions, viz. that the Wiſe-men came to Bethlehem before the Preſentation of the Child at Jeruſalem, or that they came not till he was in the ſecond Year of his Age, when his Parents, upon ſome Buſineſs or other, happened to be at Bethlehem, are attended with more Difficulties, than can eaſily be ſurmounted.

Herod, who was naturally of a jealous and ſuſpicious Temper, knew very well, that himſelf was hated by the Jews, and that the Jews were then in full Expectation of the Meſſiah (a Prince, that was to ſubdue all other Nations) to come and reign over them, and had therefore great Reaſon to fear, that this Rumour of a King's being born among them, confirmed by ſuch extraordinary Means, as Perſons coming from a far Country, and conducted to Jeruſalem by the Guidance of a wonderful Star, might be the Means to excite Sedition among the People, and occaſion perhaps a Revolution in the Government.

Some, upon this Occaſion, are apt to wonder, why none of the Jews ſhould have the Curioſity to attend the Wiſe-men in their Journey to Bethlehem; and the Reaſon, that is commonly aſſigned for their Omiſſion in this Reſpect, is the Dread they might have of offending the Tyrant, under whom they lived: But, as it is highly probable, that, when the Wiſe-men came to Jeruſalem, they made their immediate Application to Court, as the moſt likely Place where to gain Intelligence of him, "that was born King of the Jews;" and as it is much to be queſtioned whether Herod, when he convened the Doctors of the Law made any Mention of the Wiſe-men's Coming, but nakedly propounded the Queſtion to them, "where Chriſt was to be born?" ſo there is great Reaſon to preſume, that he ſent them away ſo privately, that, if any of the Jews had been courageous enough to have gone along with them, they poſſibly might not have had an Opportunity. The greater Wonder of the two therefore is, that Herod ſhould ſend none, in whom he could confide, to be preſent at the Diſcovery of this rival Prince, and to bring him Word thereof if not diſpatch him: But in this, the Protection and Providence of God was viſible.

Some

Some of the Ancients are of Opinion, that in the Preſents which theſe Eaſtern Sages made, they had a myſtical Meaning, and deſigned to ſignify their Acknowledgment both of the Divinity, Royalty, and Humanity of our bleſſed Saviour. For the Incenſe, ſay they, was proper to be given him, as a God; the Gold, as a King; and the Myrrh, as a mortal Man, whoſe Body was to be embalmed therewith. But all this is no more than the Sport of a luxuriant Fancy. 'Tis certain that the Eaſtern People never came into the Preſence of their Princes, without ſome Preſents, and that their Preſents were uſually of the moſt choice Things that their Country did afford. All that they meant therefore was to do Homage to a new born Prince of a neighbouring Nation, in the beſt Manner they could; and, if what Naturaliſts tells us be true, viz. that Myrrh was only to be found in Arabia, and Frankincenſe in Sabæa which is a Part of Arabia; that this Country was not deſtitue of Gold, 2 Chron. ix. 14. and, at the ſame Time, was famous for Men converſant in Aſtronomy, this makes a very probable Argument, that the Wiſemen came from thence. But of this we ſhall ſee more hereafter.

It is thought ſtrange by ſome, that Joſephus, who writes the Life of Herod in moſt of its Circumſtances, ſhould make no Manner of Mention of the Murder of theſe Innocents: But, when it is conſidered, that Joſephus was only born in the firſt Year of Caligula, and the thirty-ſeventh of Chriſt; that he wrote his Hiſtory of the Jewiſh Wars (which he extracted from publick Records) in the fifty-ſixth Year of his Age; and that it can ſcarce be ſuppoſed, an Action ſo inglorious to the Memory of Herod, as this Maſſacre was, ſhould be preſerved in the Jewiſh Records; it is not ſo very wonderful, that he, who wrote about ninety-three Years after the Fact was committed, ſhould make no Mention of it; nor is it very material that he did not, ſince we find Macrobius, an heathen Author, about the latter End of the fourth Age, not forgetting to acquaint us that Herod the King ordered to be ſlain in Syria (which in Roman Authors, is frequently called Judea) ſome Children that were under two Years old, though he is miſtaken in the Circumſtances of the Story, when he makes Herod's own Son to be one of them.

Some will needs infer from hence, that this dreadful Maſſacre was not committed until our Lord was almoſt two Years old, becauſe they were Children of that Age, and under, whom Herod ordered to be ſlain: But, beſides that the Greek Word may ſignify one, who has lived one Year only, and ſo the Words may be tranſlated from a Year old, and under; Herod might poſſibly think, that the Star did not appear till ſome conſiderable Time after the young King's Birth, and ſo (to make ſure Work) might be induced to ſlay all born at Bethlehem, a Year before, and more, even to the Time of the Star's appearing: For he, who had the Heart to ſlay three of his own Sons, would hardly be ſparing of the Blood of other People's Children.

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The Diſeaſe of which Herod died, and the Miſery which he ſuffered under it, plainly ſhewed that the Hand of God was then, in a ſignal Manner, upon him. For not long after the Murder of the Infants at Bethlehem, his Diſtemper (as Joſephus informs us) daily increaſed, after an unheard of Manner, and he himſelf laboured under the moſt loathſome and tormenting Accidents that can be imagined. "He had a lingering and waſting Fever, and grievous Ulcers in his Entrails and Bowels, a violent Cholick, and inſatiable Appetite, a venemous Swelling in his Feet, Convulſions in his Nerves, a perpetual Aſthma and ſtinking Breath, Rottenneſs in his Joints and privy Members, accompanied with prodigious Itchings, crawling Worms and intolerable Smells, ſo that he was a perfect Hoſpital of incurable Diſeaſes." And thus he died in horrid Pain and Torment, being ſmitten by God for his many enormous Iniquities; for ſetting aſide ſome Appearances of Generoſity and Greatneſs, there was never a more compleat Tyrant than he. He ſuppreſſed and changed the High-prieſt's Office as he thought fit, and even profaned the Temple itſelf: He ſlew the legal King of the Jews, extirpated all the Race of the Maccabees, deſtroyed the whole Sanhedrim, and ſubſtituted others in their Room. Nor was his Rage confined to the Jews, but deſcended to his own Family and neareſt Relations, even to the executing his beloved Wife Mariamne, and his two Sons, Alexander and Ariſtobulus, upon ſlight, and trivial Occaſions. So wicked a Prince as he was conſcious he had been, could not, he knew, occaſion any true Lamentation at his Death, but rather a great deal of gladneſs and Rejoicing, all the Kingdom over; and therefore, to prevent this, he framed a Project which was one of the horrideſt that ever entered into the Mind of Man. All the Nobility, and moſt conſiderable Men in every City, Town and Village in Judea, upon Pain of Death, he ſummoned to come together to Jericho, where he was then lying Sick; and when they were come, commanded his Soldiers to ſhut them all up in a ſpacious Place called the Hippodrome; when, having called his Siſter Salome, and her Huſband Alexas, with ſome choice Friends, he told them with Tears, "That he was ſenſible of the Jews Hatred to his Government and Perſon, and that his Death would be an high Satisfaction to them; that his Friends therefore ought to procure him ſome Solace and Diverſion, in the midſt of his bitter Anguiſh, which if they performed, according to his Order, the Mournings and Lamentations at his Death, would be as great and magnificent as ever any Prince had: And his Order was, that on the ſame Hour when he expired, the Soldiers ſhould ſurround the Hippodrome, and put all the encloſed Perſons to the Sword, and then publiſh his Death, which (as he ſaid) would cauſe his Exit to be doubly triumphant; firſt, for the poſthumous Execution of his Commands; and ſecondly, for the Quality and Number of his Mourners." But Salome and Alexas not being wicked

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ed enough to do what they had been made ſolemnly to promiſe, choſe rather to break their Obligation, than make themſelves the Executioners of ſo bloody a Deſign; and therefore, as ſoon as Herod was dead, they opened the Hippodrome, and permitted all that were ſhut up in it, to return to their reſpective Homes.

Antipas, before mentioned, his Father Herod had once appointed to be Succeſſor, but afterwards expunged him out of his Will, and only made him Tetrarch; but not long after his Brother's Acceſſion to the Throne, he went to Rome with a Purpoſe to diſpute the Kingdom with him, on Pretence that his Father's former Will, by which he was conſtituted King, ought to take Place before the latter, which was made when his Underſtanding was not ſo perfect. Both the Brothers procured able Orators to ſet forth their Pretenſions before the Emperor, but the Emperor nevertheleſs refuſed to decide any Thing concerning their Affair; nor did he at length give Archelaus the Title of a King, but only of an Ethnarch, with one Moiety of the Territories which his Father enjoyed; but theſe, in a few Years after, he, by his ill Conduct, forfeited. Of all the Sons of Herod, indeed, this Archelaus is ſaid to have been of the moſt fierce and bloody Temper. At his firſt Acceſſion to the Government, under the Pretence of a Mutiny, he had killed near three thouſand of his Subjects; and therefore Joſeph, hearing of this might well dread to go and ſettle in any Part of his Dominions; but as Antipas was a Man of a more mild Diſpoſition, and the Birth of Jeſus not made ſo public in Galilee, and at Nazareth, as it was at Bethlehem, and even at Jeruſalem, by the Coming of the Wiſemen, and what happened at the Purification of the Bleſſed Virgin, it was thought more adviſeable to retreat into this Village, than to ſet up their Abode in any populous City.

N. B. That the vulgar Chriſtian Æra, according to Dionyſius Exiguus, which commences four Years after the true Time of Chriſt's Birth, may begin to be computed much about this Time, viz. from the Beginning of the fourth Year of Archelaus, and thirty-firſt of Auguſtus's Reign, computing from his Victory over Anthony and Cleopatra.

" Jeſus increaſed in Wiſdom, and in Stature, and in Favour with God and Man," Luke ii. 52. but if it be aſked, how he, who was the eternal Wiſdom of his Father, could be improved in any Quality of the Mind? The Anſwer is, that all Things in Scripture, which are ſpoken of Chriſt, are not ſpoken with reſpect to his intire Perſon, but only with reſpect to one or other of the Natures, that are united in that Perſon. His divine Nature was infinite, and conſequently capable of no Improvements, but his human was: And therefore though the divine Logos was united to the human Soul, by his Conception, yet might the Divine Nature communicate its Powers to the Human, by diſtinct and gradual Illuminations; and accordingly we may obſerve, that all public Manifeſtation of it to the World, ſeems to have been induſtriouſly

JESUS found
amongst the Doctors
St. Luke. II. Ch.



induſtriouſly declined, 'till Ripeneſs of Years and Judgment had carried him up to the Perfections of a Man. So little Reaſon have we to ſuppoſe, that he, who condeſcended to be like us in Body, ſhould think it below him to be ſo too, in that other no leſs eſſential, but much more noble Part of us, our Soul, without which it was impoſſible for him to be Man; ſo little Reaſon to imagine that the divine Eſſence in him ſupplied the Place and Offices of intellectual Faculties.

When Paleſtine was reduced to this State, and our Bleſſed Saviour now advanced to the twelfth Year of his Age, according to their annual Cuſtom, he went up with his Parents to Jeruſalem at the Time of the Paſſover. His Parents, after a Stay of ſeven Days, having performed the uſual Ceremonies of the Feaſt, were now returning, with great Numbers of their Neighbours and Acquaintance, towards Galilee; and never doubting, but that Jeſus had joined himſelf with ſome of the Company, they travelled on patiently for a whole Day's Journey; but when Night came on, and among their Relations and particular Friends they could hear no particular Tidings of him, it is not eaſy to imagine the Greatneſs of their Fears and Apprehenſions, which made them return to Jeruſalem, with the utmoſt Speed, to make all poſſible Inquiry for him.

At the End of three Days, they found him in one of the Rooms of the temple (probably in that of the grand Sanhedrim) ſitting among the learned Doctors and Maſters of Iſrael, hearing them diſcourſe, and propounding ſuch Queſtions to them, as raiſed the Admiration of all his Auditors, and made them aſtoniſhed at the Ripeneſs of his Underſtanding. Nor were his Parents leſs ſurprized to find him in that Place; but when his Mother told him with what Impatience they had ſought him, and in ſome Meaſure blamed him for putting them into ſuch a Fright; the Excuſe which he made for himſelf, was, "Knew you not that I muſt be employed in my Father's Houſe?" Words, which though ſhe at that Time did not rightly underſtand, ſhe took Care, nevertheleſs, for ever after, to regiſter in her Mind?

Being thus happily found by his Parents, he returned with them to Nazareth, and there living in all dutiful Subjection to them, wrought, very probably, with his reputed Father, in the Trade of a Carpenter, and after his Father's Death (which is ſuppoſed to have happened about a Year before the preaching of John the Baptiſt) he ſtill continued in the ſame Occupation; as indeed we can ſcarce help inferring, from the rude Treatment of the Nazarenes his Townſmen, as alſo from the total Silence of the Evangeliſts, as to the intermediate Actions of his Life, that though he "grew in favour with God and Man," yet, conſidering his Excellencies, he lived in a very obſcure Manner, and till the Time of his Manifeſtation to Iſrael, ſhewed no miraculous Marks to diſtinguiſh him from the reſt of Mankind.

It is commonly obſerved by thoſe that are learned in the Cuſtoms and

Inſtitutions of the Jewiſh Church, that until a Child was twelve Years old, he was not obliged to go to Jeruſaſem, at the Time of the Paſſover; and that though their Youths were uſually thirteen before they were brought before the Maſters of the Synagogue, to give an Account of their Proficiency in Religion (which anſwers, in a great Meaſure, to the Chriſtian Rite of Confirmation) yet, ſince the Seaſon then appointed, was accommodated to the Capacities and Attainments of Children in general, without forbidding thoſe of Qualifications extraordinary, and whoſe Genius (in the Jewiſh Phraſe) "did run before the Commandment," to appear ſooner, our Saviour might offer himſelf, to his Examination, a Year before the common Time; and this is the beſt Reaſon that can be aſſigned for his ſtaying behind his Parents, when he could not but know, that they were departed from Jeruſalem without him; and for his being found in one of the Rooms adjoining to the Temple, where the Doctors of the Law uſed to meet, not only to reſolve the Queſtions that were brought before them, but to examine likewiſe and confirm ſuch of the Youth as they found to be qualified for that Ceremoney; which, according to the ſame Authors, was uſually performed by devout Prayers and ſolemn Benedictions.

It may ſeem a little ſtrange perhaps, that Mary and Joſeph, who had been ſufficiently inſtructed, one would think, in the great Article of Chriſt's Divinity, and therefore muſt certainly know, that as "he was the Power and Wiſdom of God, he could neither fall into any Danger, nor come to any Harm, ſhould ſo mightily afflict themſelves, when they came to miſs him. The Reaſon which Origin ſeems to aſſign is, not that his Parents ſuppoſed that he was loſt, or come to any miſchance, but were apprehenſive that he had withdrawn himſelf to ſome other Place, and was poſſibly gone up to Heaven, there to continue until his eternal Father ſhould think proper to ſend him down again: But the moſt eaſy and natural Solution is, that without ever conſidering what they had ſufficient Reaſon to believe concerning his Divinity and Omnipotence, they ſuffered themſelves to be carried away by their natural Tenderneſs, and could not, without great Concern, ſee themſelves deprived of his Company, uncertain of what had befallen him, or for what poſſible Reaſon he ſhould abſent himſelf from theirs. It muſt not be denied, however, that though ſomething may be allowed to a Parent's Fondneſs, yet it does not appear from their whole Conduct, and eſpecially from Mary's Complaint, and our Saviour's Reply, that they had, as yet, a clear and perfect Knowledge of his divine Nature in Union with the human, and therefore the Evangeliſt has remarked upon them, "That they underſtood not the Saying which he ſpake unto them."

From the Words in the Text, "After three Days they found him;" we need not thence infer, that they were three Days ſeeking him, but rather, that it was three Days from the Time they ſet out from Jeruſalem; going on

on their Journey the firſt Day; returning to Jeruſalem the ſecond; and finding him in the Temple on the third: For ſince they found him in the Temple, which, in all Probability, was the firſt Place they ſought for him, we can hardly imagine that they ſhould be three Days in Jeruſalem before they found him.

It may poſſibly be made a Queſtion, why the Evangeliſts have given us no Account of our Saviours Life, from the twelfth Year of his Age, till he began his Miniſtry, which, according to the vulgar Æra, was about the thirtieth; becauſe, if in this intermediate Space, he did any Thing worthy of Remembrance, it ought, in all Reaſon, to have been recorded. But when it is conſidered, that the End of the ſacred Penman was, not ſo much to gratify our Curioſity, as to conſult our Profit, we cannot but admire the great Wiſdom of God (by whoſe Inſpiration they wrote) in paſſing by the leſs active Parts of our Lord's Life, which would certainly have ſwelled their Goſpels to immenſurable Volumes, fit for the Peruſal of none but the Studious, and ſuch as had Plenty of Time at their Command; whereas now, taking the four Goſpels together, they make but a ſmall Book, and ſeparately, no more than little Manuals that may be carried about us whereever we go, may be ſoon read over, and eaſily remembered, even by Men of mean Capacities, and no great Leiſure; and yet they contain all the Tranſactions of our Saviour's Life, which chiefly concerns us to know: I mean, ſuch as relate to his mediatorial Office, as that he came into the World to teach us; to die, and to riſe again for us; to inſtruct us by his heavenly Doctrine, as our Prophet; to offer himſelf a Sacrifice on the Croſs, as our Prieſt; and to looſe the Bands of Death, and aſcend triumphant into Heaven, as our King. "For there are alſo many other Things, ſays the Evangeliſt, that Jeſus did, which are not written in this Book, but theſe are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name," John xxi. 5. and xx. 31.

In the eighteenth Year of our Saviour's Life, died Auguſtus Ceſar, at Nola in Campania, after a Reign of near forty-four Years, to the inexpreſſible Grief of all his Subjects, and was ſucceeded by Tiberius, the Son of his Wife Livia, by a former Huſband, but a Prince of quite contrary Diſpoſition to his Predeceſſor. In the ſecond Year of his Acceſſion to the Empire, he called Rufus from the Government of Judea, and ſent Valerius Gratus (who was the fourth Governor in theſe Parts, ſince the Baniſhment of Archelaus) to ſucceed him. Gratus having continued in Judea about eleven Years, was at length recalled, and Pontius Pilate (a Perſon too like his Maſter Tiberius, of a fierce and irreconcileable Spirit, and of a cruel and covetous Diſpoſition) was ſent Governor in his Place; in the firſt Year of whoſe Coming (which was the fifteenth Year of Tiberius, from the Time that he was

admitted to Reign in Co-partnerſhip with Auguſtus) John the Baptiſt began to open his Commiſſion for the Preparation of our Saviour's Way before him, by preaching "the Baptiſm of Repentance for the Remiſſion of Sins.

He had been bred up in the Wilderneſs, and lived an auſtere Life on Locuſts and Wild-honey; ſuch as Nature produced in theſe deſart Places, was the chief Diet he lived upon, and a looſe Coat made of Camels Hair, and faſtened with a Leathern Girdle, the only Garb he wore; and therefore no Perſon was ſo proper to inculcate the Doctrines of Repentance and Reformation, as he, who by his free and reſolute Preaching, joined with this great Severity of Life, ſoon procured a vaſt Auditory, and numerous Proſelytes of all Ranks and Qualities, from Jeruſalem and all Judea, and all the Region about Jordan, confeſſing their Sins before God, and entering into this new Inſtitution by Baptiſm.

Among the great Multitudes that came to his Preaching and Baptiſm, there were Phariſees, and Sadducees not a few, whoſe Confidence and Immorality he ſharply reproved, while at the ſame Time he exhorted the common People to Works of extenſive Charity; the Publicans, to avoid Oppreſſion and Injuſtice; the Soldiers to abſtain from Plunder and Violence; and every one, in ſhort, to beware of thoſe Crimes to which their Employments and Manner of Life did moſt expoſe them.

Theſe ſolemn Admonitions, attended with ſo much Innocence and Authority, procured him a mighty Veneration among the People; inſomuch that ſeveral began to look upon him as the promiſed, and now expected Meſſiah: But, to remove all Thoughts of this Kind, he freely declared, that he only baptized them with Water, to Repentance and a new Life; but that there was one coming, and ready to appear among them, who would baptize them with the Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, and who ſo far exceeded him in Power and Excellency, that he was not worthy to do for him, the meaneſt or moſt ſervile Office. Theſe were the Doctrines which John preached, and this the Teſtimony which he gave of Jeſus, even before he had the Happineſs to know him.

After John had continued in his Miniſtry for ſeveral Months, our Lord thought proper to remove from his private Retirement, at Nazareth: and taking Leave of his Mother and his Trade, paſſed over into Judea, to Bethabara, on the Banks of the River Jordan, where John was then baptizing.

He, who was innocence and Purity itſelf, had certainly no Need of the Baptiſm of Repentance, but being minded to honour and ſanctify the Inſtitution, he offered himſelf to John; and when John, inſpired with a prophetic Spirit, knew him, and thereupon endeavoured to decline the Office, he gave him ſuch Reaſons for the Expediency of the Thing, as made him no longer heſitate, but immediately baptize him. Jeſus was no ſooner got out of the Water, but as he was making his Addreſſes to Heaven, the Sky on a ſudden was divided by a great Radiancy,

Radiancy, and the Holy Ghoſt, in the Manner of a Dove, deſcended upon his ſacred Head, with an audible Voice from Heaven, wherein God declared him his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleaſed.

Joſephus has given us ſeveral Inſtances of Pilate's great Cruelty in the Courſe of his Government, viz. that he called the Roman Soldiers to fall upon a great Number of Galileans (very likely the Followers of Judas Gaulonites) and to ſlaughter them like ſo many Sheep, in the Temple, and on the very Day appointed for the killing of the Paſſover, and ſo mingled their blood with their Sacrifices, Luke xiii. 1. That when the People clamoured againſt his taking ſome of the ſacred Money out of the Temple, he ordered the Soldiers, upon a Signal given, to fall upon them with large Battoons, ſo that many died of the Blows which they received, and many were trodden to Death in the Throng: And that the Samaritans, as well as the Jews, felt the Severity of his Adminiſtation, when he deſtroyed great Numbers of them near Tirathaba; and of thoſe whom he took, that were of any Intereſt or Quality among them, ſtruck off their Heads.

How John paſſed the former Part of his Life, the Scripture is ſilent; but there is an antient Tradition in the Church, that Elizabeth, hearing of the ſad Havock which Herod's Barbarity had made among the Infants in Bethlehem, fled into the Wilderneſs, to ſecure her Child from the Tyrant's Rage, and there attended him with all the Care and Tenderneſs of an affectionate Mother: That the Child was about eighteen Months old, when his Mother thus fled with him, but after forty Days ſhe died, and his Father Zacharias, at the next Time of his Adminiſtration, was, by the Command of Herod (becauſe he would not diſcover the Place of his Son's Concealment put to Death: That in this Deſtitution of natural Parents, God ſent an Angel to be his Nouriſher and Guardian (as he had formerly done to Elijah, when he fled from the Rage of Ahab) until he came of Strength to provide for himſelf, and that then he lived in the manner that the Evangeliſts have deſcribed. When he began his Preaching is not ſo well agreed, Lightfoot, and ſome others, who believe that our Saviour was born in September, and that John was now beginning to be thirty Years of Age, are of Opinion that he began his Miniſtry about the Paſſover; but Uſher and his Followers, do with more Probability ſuppoſe, that his Preaching began upon the tenth Day of the ſeventh Month (which anſwers to our nineteenth Day of October) five Days before the Feaſt of Tabernacles, upon the great Day of Expiation, when the High-prieſt entered the Holy of Holies, and when ſo ſolemn a Faſt was injoined, that whoſoever did not afflict his Soul at that Time, was to be cut off from the People.

The Meaning of the Phraſe is, that John preached Repentance, Matt. iii. 2. and baptized thoſe that were penitent, in Token of the Remiſſion of their Sins, even as they, on their Parts received

ceived Baptiſm, in Teſtimony of the Sincerity of their Repentance. Now Baptiſm, we know, was no new or ſtrange Thing among the Jews. It was acknowledged and practiſed, as an Emblem of Purification from paſt Guilt, and a Rite of entering ſolemnly into Covenant with God. The Expoſitors of their Law agree, that this Ceremony paſſed upon the whole Congregation of Iſrael, juſt before the Law was given at Mount Sinai; and their Cuſtom, in all ſucceeding Ages, has been, to receive their heathen Proſelytes by Baptiſm as well as by Sacrifices, and Circumciſion. In Conformity to this therefore, John both adminiſtered and exhorted his followers to his Ordinance of Baptiſm, as an Evidence of their Penitence for paſt Sins, and Profeſſion of better Obedience for the future: But then as Faith is a Qualification for Baptiſm, as well as Repentance, he propounded our Lord, for the Object of Faith to all who received this Ordinance at his Hands: "For John verily baptized with the Baptiſm of Repentance, ſaying unto the People, that they ſhould believe in him, who ſhould come after him, i. e. on Chriſt Jeſus," Acts xix. 4. It is a great Miſtake therefore, in ſome, to ſuppoſe that the Baptiſm of John was in Subſtance, the ſame with what Chriſt did afterwards inſtitute: For John neither did, nor could baptize his Diſciples in the "Name of the Holy Ghoſt," as the Apoſtles did, becauſe the "Holy Ghoſt was not yet given," John vii. 39. he did not baptize them in the Name of Chriſt, for had he done ſo, there had been no Occaſion for the Queſtion, "Whether he himſelf were the Chriſt," or not? Luke iii. 15. Herein therefore lay the Imperfection of John's Baptiſm, that though it prepared Men to be Chriſtians, yet it did not make them ſo; and therefore we find St. Paul baptizing again ſome Diſciples at Epheſus (who had before received the Baptiſm of John) in order to fit them for the Reception of the Holy Ghoſt, Acts xix. 5, 6.

A Wilderneſs, among the Jews, did not ſignify a Place wholly void of Inhabitants, but a Place that was more mountainous, leſs fruitful, leſs peopled, and where the Habitations were more diſperſed, than in other Parts of the Country; and the wilderneſs of Judea, where John preached and baptized, lay on each Side of the River Jordan, on the Confines of Enon and Salim.

There is no Reaſon, for running into Criticiſms, what the common Diet of the Baptiſt was, whether Fowl or Fiſh, or Herbs, or wild Peaſe (for the Greek Word has been made to ſignify all theſe) ſince the Thing is well known, that Locuſts (in the moſt obvious Senſe of the Word) were Creatures which the Levitical Law looked upon as clean, and allowed the Jews to eat, Levit. xi. 22. that they were a common Food, as the Antients affirm in Africa, Perſia, Syria, and even Paleſtine itſelf: that, according to the Account of ſome modern Authors, in ſome Places they are brought in Waggon loads, and ſold in the Market for the common people to feed on; and that they are frequently

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ſeen upon the Banks of the River Jordan, of the ſame Form, but much larger than ours; and being either fried in Oil, or dried in the Sun, are accounted a good Sort of Food. As little Reaſon is there for Men to puzzle themſelves about what this wild Honey means, ſince every one knows that Judea was ſo famed for Plenty of Honey, that in ſeveral Places of Scripture, it is ſaid to flow with Honey; and from the Inſtances of Sampſon, Judg. xiv. 8. and Jonathan, 2 Sam. xix. 25. it muſt be concluded, that wild Honey, ſuch as either diſtilled from the Boughs like Dew, or was found in the Cliffs of Rocks, or hollow Trunks of Trees, was no uncommon Thing in that Country. But though theſe Locuſts and wild Honey, may very properly be taken in their natural and moſt obvious Senſe, yet it muſt not therefore be thought that John never eat any Thing elſe, but that, for the Generality, he made uſe of ſuch ſlender Diet, and contented himſelf with what the deſart Place, which he choſe for his Habitation, could afford him.

We are told, by ſome Authors, that the Hair of Camels, about the Caſpian Sea, was formerly the ſofteſt in the World, of which was made a very fine Stuff; and that, in the Empire of the great Cham of Tartary, in the City of Calacia, the Metropolis of the Province of Tangouth, there is a Kind of Cloth, which the Inhabitants call Zambeloote (the ſame no doubt, with what we call Camelot) made of Wool and Camels-Hair, perfectly good, and as fine as any Cloth whatever. But there is Reaſon good to think, that John's Habit was far from being of this Kind, becauſe it would not ſo well ſuit with the Condition of a Man living in a Wilderneſs, to whom our Saviour oppoſes thoſe that are clothed in ſoft Raiments; would not ſo well agree with the Evangeliſt's Deſign of ſetting forth the Baptiſt's Auſterity in his Habit, as well as his Diet; nor comport ſo well with the Deſcription of Elias, whom, he came to repreſent, an hairy Man, and one girt with a Girdle of Leather about his Loins, 2 Kings i. 8. Though therefore we may not infer from the Expreſſion, that the Baptiſt's Habit was mere Sackcloth, (as ſome would have it) yet we cannot but conclude from thence, that it was plain and coarſe, ſuch as became the Place where he lived (where Camels, we are told, were in great Plenty) and a Prophet and Preacher of Righteouſneſs to wear.

We need only take Notice here, that the Phariſees are thought to take their Name from the Word Pariſh, which ſignifies, Separation, becauſe they were ſeparated from all others in their extraordinary Pretences to Sanctity, and ſome particular Obſervances; and that the Sadducees, (who were directly oppoſite to the Phariſees, both in Temper and Principles) derived their Name, either from Sadoc, who lived near three hundred Years before our Saviour's Birth, and is ſuppoſed to be the Founder of the Sect, (or as ſome think) from Sedec, which ſignifies Juſtice, and were very rigid, indeed, in the Execution of it.

The Publicans were Perſons of no particular

particular Sect, nor of any religious Function among the Jews, but certain public Officers, whom the Romans employed to collect their Tributes, Tolls and Impoſt. This Office was once of great Account among the Romans, and conferred upon none leſs than the Equeſtrian Order; but when it came to fall into the Hands of the Jews, who farmed it of the Romans, it ſoon became baſe and infamous, and more eſpecially odious to the Jews, upon theſe two Accounts: 1ſt, Becauſe theſe Tributes were looked upon as a ſtanding Inſtance of their Slavery, which they who made ſuch Boaſts of their being a free-born People, and inveſted with that Privilege by God himſelf could leaſt of all endure. And 2dly, Becauſe theſe Publicans having farmed the Cuſtoms, of the Romans, at high Rates, did generally make uſe of all Methods of Extortion and Oppreſſion, to enable them both to pay their Rents, and to make ſome Advantage to themſelves. Upon theſe Accounts, the Publicans, as conſpiring with the Romans, both to impoveriſh and enſlave their Countrymen, became ſo univerſally abhorred by the Jewiſh Nation, that they held it unlawful to do them any Act of common Courteſey, nay, even to eat or drink with them, for which we find them ſo frequently blaming our Saviour.

Bethabara, in the Hebrew Language, ſignifies as much as a Place of Paſſage; and therefore, whereas we read, Joſh. ii. 7, 23. that there was a fording Place over Jordan, not far from Jericho; and again, Joſh. iii. 16. that the People paſſed over right againſt Jericho, it is probably conjectured, that hereabouts ſtood Bethabara, and was the place of Reception and Entertainment for Paſſengers out of Judea in Perea, or the Country beyond Jordan; nay, it is imagined by ſome, that in the very ſame Place of the River where the Ark ſtood, while the Iſraelites paſſed over, our bleſſed Saviour, the Ark of the Covenant of Grace, was baptized by John the Baptiſt.

There are ſome other Reaſons which might induce our Lord to come to John's Baptiſm, beſides what himſelf alledges, viz. the Performance of all Righteouſneſs, or whatever had a Tendency to the People's Edification; as that he might authorize this Baptiſm of John, by his public Approbation; that by this Rite he might be initiated to his prophetic Office, and conſecrated to the Service of God; that hereby he might aboliſh the Ceremony of the Jewiſh Baptiſm, and more effectually recommend that of his own Inſtitution, to which this of the Baptiſt was an Introduction; and more eſpecially that in the Preſence of the Baptiſt, and all the Company that had reſorted to him he might obtain the Teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt, and his heavenly Father, to confirm John in the Belief of his being the promiſed Meſſiah, and to induce the People, as ſoon as he began his Miniſtry, to follow and attend him.

The Words in the Text are theſe, Then cometh Jeſus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him, but John forbad him, Luke iii. 13, 14. but how could John forbid him, when he ſays of himſelf, "I knew him not, but

but he that ſent me to baptize with Water, the ſame ſaid unto me, Upon whom thou ſhalt ſee the Spirit deſcending and remaining on him, the ſame is he who baptizeth with the Holy Ghoſt, John i. 33. Now to this it may be anſwered, that ſince one Part of John's Miniſtry was to bear witneſs of that Light, which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World, it was highly neceſſary, that our Saviour ſhould be unknown to him in Perſon, before he came to his Baptiſm, that the World might have no Suſpicion of any Colluſion, or that the Baptiſt teſtified of him by Compact. Though notwithſtanding he had never ſeen the Face of our Saviour, becauſe they were bred up in different Countries, yet by a particular Revelation, he knew that he was already come into the World, and was ſhortly to baptize with the Holy Ghoſt; and therefore when our Saviour came, and preſented himſelf to be baptized, he had immediately an other Revelation, that this was the great Perſon, of whom he had been told before; even as Samuel, having been told by God, that "on the Morrow, a Man ſhould come to him to be the Captain over his People Iſrael," 1 Sam. ix. 15. upon Saul's appearing, had another Inſpiration reſembling the Baptiſt's here. "Behold the Man of whom I ſpake to thee," ver. 17.

The Obſervation of the Greek Church, in Relation to our Saviour's Baptiſm, is this, That he who aſcended out of the Water, muſt firſt deſcend down into it; and conſequently, "that Baptiſm is to be performed, not by ſprinkling, but by waſhing the Body." And indeed he muſt be ſtrangely ignorant of the Jewiſh Rites of Baptiſm, who ſeems to doubt of this, ſince, to the due Performance of it, they required the Immerſion of the whole Body, to ſuch a Degree of Nicety, that if any Dirt was upon it, that hindered the Water from coming to that Part, they thought the Ceremony not rightly done. The Chriſtians, no doubt, took this Rite from the Jews, and followed them in the Manner of performing it. Accordingly, ſeveral Authors have ſhewn, that we read no where in Scripture of any one's being baptized, but by Immerſion; and from the Acts of Councils, and antient Rituals, have proved that this Manner of Immerſion continued (as much as poſſible) to be uſed, for thirteen hundred Years after Chriſt. But it is much to be queſtioned, whether the Prevalence of Cuſtom, and the over Fondneſs of Parents, will ever ſuffer it to be reſtored, eſpecially in theſe cold Countries.

The Words in St. Matthew,—"Lo the Heavens were open, in St Mark, cloven or rent." The common People of the Jews, indeed, were of Opinion, that the Heavens were firm and ſolid, and that the Fire, which fell from thence upon the Face of the Earth, burſt through this Firmament, and made an opening in this vaſt Convex, that ſurrounds us: And therefore it is that the Evangeliſts expreſs themſelves in this Manner, in Accommodation to the Prejudices and Capacities of the Vulgar. But by the Phraſe we need underſtand no more, than that a ſud-

den Beam of radient Light came darting from the Skies (like a Flaſh of Lightning from the Clouds) and made it ſeem as though the Heavens had been opened, or rent, to let it out; becauſe, to the naked Eye, the Air, at that Time ſeemed to divide to make a clearer and fuller Way for the Light.

The Antients were generally of Opinion, that the Holy Ghoſt, in his Deſcent upon our Saviour, aſſumed the real Shape of a Dove, which at that Time, more eſpecially, was a very proper Repreſentation of his Dove-like Nature, Iſaiah xlii. 2. and of all ſuch as were to receive the ſame Spirit, and are required to be as harmleſs as Doves; but moſt of the Moderns (though they allow that the bleſſed Spirit did, at this Time, aſſume a viſible Shape, to render his Deſcent manifeſt) do maintain that the Greek Words relate not to the Body or Shape of a Dove, but to the Manner of a Doves deſcending, and lighting on any Thing. Whether of theſe Opinions ſhould prevail, it is idle to diſpute, ſince neither of them are deſtitute of ſome Countenance from Scripture, neither of them injurious to the dignity of the Holy Ghoſt.

Our bleſſed Lord, being thus by Baptiſm and the Unction of the Holy Ghoſt, prepared for his prophetic Office, was, by the Impulſe of the divine Spirit, carried farther into the Wilderneſs of Judea, where, after he had faſted forty Days and forty Nights (as Moſes did on Mount Sinai) and was now very hungry, the Devil aſſumed a bodily Shape, and ſet upon him with a threefold Temptation. Firſt, from his Hunger he took Occaſion to tempt him to deſpair and diſtruſt of his Father's Care of him, who had abandoned him in that Condition, and therefore perſuading him that he was not the Son of God, he put him upon the Experiment of his being ſuch, by making the Stones become Bread: But our Saviour ſoon anſwered him by a Paſſage out of the Scripture, intimating, that God, when he pleaſed, could employ Means extraordinary for the Support and Nouriſhment of Men. Secondly, His next Eſſay was to try how far Pride and Preſumption would affect him; and therefore carrying him through the Air, and ſetting him upon the higheſt Part of the Temple, he put him upon the Proof of his being the Son of God, by throwing himſelf off from thence, and flying in the Air, alledging a Text out of the Pſalmiſt, to encourage him: But Jeſus as ſoon anſwered him by another Text, commanding Men not to tempt God, or depend upon his Providence for their Preſervation, in Dangers of their own ſeeking. Thirdly, His laſt Experiment was, to tempt him with the Charms of Ambition; and therefore, tranſporting him again through the Air, to the Top of an exceeding high Mountain, he there, by an angelical Power, made a lively Repreſentation to him, of all the Kingdoms of the World, with all their dazzling Glories at one View, and then told him, that theſe, with all their Pomp and Splendor, were delivered to his Diſpoſal, and ſhould be given to him, if he would but acknowledge his Benefac-

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tor and worſhip him: But this was Boldneſs and Blaſphemy, ſuch as provoked our Lord to exert his divine Power, and to command him peremptorily to be gone, but with this Memento out of Scripture likewiſe, "Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve:" Whereupon the Devil left him for that Time, and Angels, ſent from Heaven, came with Refreſhments for him, after his triumphant Combat.

During our Saviour's Temptation in the Deſart, his faithful Fore-runner, John the Baptiſt, being thus aſſured, both by the Deſcent of the Spirit, and the Voice from Heaven, that Jeſus was the true and long expected Meſſiah, he made full and open Declarations of it to all the Multitude that came to hear him; and when the grand Sanhedrim at Jeruſalem had ſent a Deputation of their Prieſts and Levites (who were of the Sect of the Phariſees) to demand of him, Who he was? He very readily acknowledged, that he was not the Meſſiah whom they expected, nor Elias, who, as they imagined, would perſonally appear among them, nor any other Prophet riſen from the Dead; but then he gave them to underſtand, that though he was not Elias himſelf, yet he was that Prophet, whom Iſaiah intended, when he called him, "the Voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, make ſtrait the Way of the Lord;" that his Baptiſm was only of Water, but the Efficacy of it depended upon one among them, whom they knew not, one, who ſucceeded him, indeed, in Time, but ſo far ſurpaſſed him in Dignity, that he was not worthy ſo much as to be his Servant.

The very next Day after the Departure of the Phariſees, as our Saviour was returning from the Wilderneſs to Bethabara, John pointed him out to the Multitude, as "the immaculate Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sins of Mankind," and then freely declared, that he was the very Perſon of whoſe Superiority, both in Dignity and Exiſtence he had ſpoken, and of whom, by certain Tokens he knew, and could bear record that he was the Son of God.

To two of his own Diſciples, the next Day, he gave the ſame Teſtimony, inſomuch that they left their old Maſter, and followed Jeſus; and when Andrew, (who was one of them) went and diſcovered the ſame Thing to his elder Brother Simon, he too became one of his Diſciples, to whom, the Day following, were adjoined Philip, an Inhabitant of the City Bethſaida, and an intimate Friend of his, named Nathanael, of Cana in Galilee, ſuppoſed to be the ſame with the Apoſtle Bartholomew.

With theſe five Diſciples, Jeſus and his Mother were invited, next Day, to a Marriage-feaſt in Cana, a ſmall Place in Galilee, not far from Nazareth. At this Solemnity there happened to be a Scarcity of Wine, which when his Mother underſtood, ſhe made her Application to him, in hopes that by ſome Means or other he would not fail to ſupply the Defect. In other Inſtances, no doubt, ſhe had been made ſenſible of his ſupernatural Power; and therefore (though his Anſwer ſeems to carry

in it the Appearance of a Denial) ſhe ſtill expected ſomething extraordinary from him, and therefore ordered the Waiters to obey his Commands with the utmoſt Exactneſs.

The Cuſtom of the Jews, in all their Entertainments, was to uſe frequent Waſhings; and, for this purpoſe, there were, in a certain private Room, ſix Water-ciſterns, containing each about twenty Gallons of our Meaſure. Theſe our Saviour commanded the Servants to fill up to the Brim, and when they had ſo done, to carry the Liquor to the Governor of the Feaſt, for him to diſtribute to the reſt of the Company, as the Manner then was. But when the Governor had taſted it, he was not a little ſurprized; and calling to the Bridegroom, told him, with a pleaſant Air, That at moſt Entertainments like this, it was an uſual Thing for People to bring out their beſt Wine at firſt, and worſe when the Gueſts had drunk plentifully; but that he, contrary to the common Cuſtom, had reſerved his beſt to the latter End of the Feaſt.

This was the firſt Miracle our Saviour did in any public Manner, which proved both a Manifeſtation of his own Divinity, and a Confirmation of his own Diſciples Faith. From Cana he went down to Capernaum, the Place where he uſually afterwards reſided; but his Stay at this Time was not long there, becauſe his Purpoſe was to go to Jeruſalem at the approaching Feaſt of the Paſſover.

Whoever conſiders the Weakneſs of human Nature, cannot but allow, that ſo great and ſo long an Abſtinence, without any Senſe of Hunger (for the Evangeliſts tell us that our Saviour was only hungry afterwards) muſt be altogether miraculous, and ſo no Duty to us; and if he reflects withal, that the End of his Faſt was not to chaſtize or ſubdue that Body, which was never irregular (as the Deſign of all Faſting is) he muſt allow, that our Saviour, in this Particular, ſet no precedent to us, and therefore it is Cruelty or a ſuperſtitious Folly, at leaſt, in a Matter ſo ſupernatural, to enjoin Men to follow his Steps.

The word Devil, which anſwers exactly with the Hebrew Satan, ſignifies a Calumniator or Accuſer; and, as it occurs in Scripture, always in the ſingular Number, is ſuppoſed to denote that evil Spirit who tempted our firſt Parents, the Chief of the Rebel Angels, and the avowed Enemy of the Saints.

According to the Deſcription that Joſephus gives us of the Temple which Herod built, we hear of no Pinnacles or lofty Turrets above the reſt of the Building; and therefore have Reaſon to think, that the Greek which is rendered Pinnacle, ſhould rather ſignify the Battlement, or that Parapet-wall which was carried round to the Top of the Temple, (as well as private Houſes, Deut. xxii. 8.) to keep Men from falling from the Roof. And if we may be allowed to conjecture on what Part of the Battlement it was, that the Devil placed our Saviour, it ſeems very likely that it was on the Top of that Gallery whoſe Building (according to the ſame Author) was ſo prodigiouſly high, and the

the Valley underneath it ſo ſtupendouſly deep, that it turned ones Eyes and Head to look from the Top to the Bottom of it, and was, indeed, one of the moſt confounding Spectacles under the Sun.

The beſt Account that we have, both of the Wilderneſs and high Mountain, where our Lord was tempted, is in the Travels of Mr. Maundrel (for the Antients tell us very little of them) who inform us, That, in his Journey from Jeruſalem to Jordan, after he paſſed over Mount Olivet, he proceeded in an intricate Way, among Hills and Vallies interchangeable; and after ſome Hours Travel in this ſort of Road, arrived at the mountainous Deſart, into which our bleſſed Saviour was led by the Spirit, to be tempted by the Devil: A miſerable dry Place, ſays he, it is, conſiſting of high rocky mountains, ſo torn and diſordered, as if the Earth had here ſuffered ſome great convulſion, in which its very Bowels had been turned outward. From the Top of theſe Hills of Deſolation, we, had, however, a delightful Proſpect of Arabia, the Dead-Sea, and the Plains of Jericho, into which laſt we deſcended, after about five Hours March from Jeruſalem. As ſoon as we entered the Plain, we turned upon the Left-Hand, and going about one Hour that Way, came to the Foot of the Quarantania, (ſo called from our Lord's forty Days Faſt) which, they ſay, is the Mountain where the devil tempted him with the viſionary Scene of all the kingdoms and Glories of the World. It is very high and ſteep, and its Aſcent not only difficult, but dangerous. This is the Account which our Countryman gives of the Place where our Saviour was probably tempted: But it is not to be ſuppoſed, that even from the higheſt Mountain of the World, the Devil could ſhew all the Kingdoms of it, and therefore the moſt rational Account of this Matter, is that, as he was the Prince of the Power of the Air, he formed an airy Horizon (as Dr. Lightfoot expreſſes it) before the Eyes of Chriſt, which might carry ſuch a pompous and glorious Appearance of Kingdoms, States and Royalties, in the Face of it, as if he had ſeen thoſe very Kingdoms and States in Reality. God, we are told, cauſed Moſes to ſee the whole Land of Promiſe from the Top of Nebo (as it is generally thought) by repreſenting it to him in a large Plan or Map of it, in all the Vallies round about him; and in like Manner (by the Divine Permiſſion) in all the Vallies round about the high Mountain, on which our Lord ſtood the Devil might make a large Draught of the ſtately Edifices, the Guards and attendance of Kings and Princes appearing in their Splendor, viſible to the Eye, which he could not have ſeen ſo advantageouſly, had he ſtood on a Plain.

The Sanhedrim thought proper, out of their Body, to depute ſuch as were of the Sect of the Phariſees, becauſe, as they were Perſons who believed the Immortality of the Soul, and the Reſurrection of the Body; they were better qualified than the Sadducees, who believed neither, to enquire of John, whether he was Elias; being, in this Particular, mere Pythagoreans, and fancying

fancying that the Soul of one great Man might frequently paſs into another's Body; and as they were the Patrons of Tradition, and exact in all the ordinary Rules and Cuſtoms that were to be obſerved, they were the properer Perſons to examine into this new Rite of Baptiſm, by way of Preparation for the Meſſiah, of which their Traditions were wholly ſilent, and therefore they aſk him, Why baptizeſt thou? i. e. Why uſurpeſt thou an Authority which belongs to none, but either to the Meſſiah, Elias, or ſome other Prophet; by initiating us, who are already under the Covenant, into a new Doctrine by Baptiſm, which is uſually adminiſtered to none but heathen Proſelytes? And from hence it appears, that the Phariſees were the propereſt Men to ſend to the Baptiſt upon this Meſſage.

It was a received Tradition among the Jews, that at the Coming of the Meſſiah, ſeveral of the antient Prophets would ariſe from the Dead.

It is the Opinion of ſome, that John choſe rather to preach and to fulfil his Miniſtry in the Wilderneſs, than in the Temple, in order to make a moſt illuſtrious Difference between himſelf and Chriſt, of whom it was propheſied, that he ſhould frequently appear and teach in the Temple, Mal. iii. 1.

Under the Jewiſh Law, when any Sacrifice was offered for Sin, he that brought it, laid his Hands upon it, according to the Commandment of God, Levit. i. 4. iii. 2. iv. 4. and by that Rite, transferred his Sins upon the Victim, which, after ſuch Acts, is ſaid to take and to carry them away. Accordingly, in the daily Sacrifices of the Lamb, the Stationary Men, who were the Repreſentatives of the People, and laid their Hands upon the Lambs that were to be offered, are ſaid to make an Atonement for their Souls, Exod. xxx. 15, 16. in Analogy hereunto, Chriſt is here called, by Way of Eminence, the Lamb of God, becauſe God intended to "lay upon him, who was manifeſt to take away Sin," 1 John iii. 5. and came to ſuffer in our Stead, the Puniſhment due to the Iniquities of us all.

There is no mention of Bethſaida in the Old Teſtament, and the Reaſon is, becauſe (as Joſephus tells us) it was but a very ſmall Village, 'till Philip the Tetrarch, built it up to the Bulk and Appearance of a very magnificent City, and gave it the Name of Julius, out of Reſpect to Julia, the Daughter of Auguſtus Cæſar. Its original Name, in the Hebrew Tongue, imports a Place of fiſhing, or elſe hunting; and for both theſe Exerciſes it was very commodiouſly ſituated. As it belonged to the Tribe of Naphthali, a Country remarkable for its Plenty of Deer, Gen. xlix. 21. it was excellently fitted for the latter of theſe Paſtimes, and as it lay on the North End of the Lake of Genezareth, juſt where the River Jordan runs into it; it was ſo commodious for the former, that two of the Perſons juſt now mentioned, viz. Peter and Andrew, were Fiſhermen by Trade.

To aſcend and deſcend, to come and go, according to the Hebrew Manner of Expreſſion, denotes a free and familiar Commerce, and ſuch, no doubt, was the Miniſtry of Angels, at our Saviour's

viour's Temptation and Agony, at his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion. The Words, however, muſt be owned to be a plain Alluſion to Jacob's Ladder, Gen. xxviii. 12, 13. on the Top of which was the Divine Majeſty, and the Angels aſcending to receive his Commands, and deſcending to execute them; and therefore others have thought that Chriſt, by theſe Words, intended to inform his Apoſtles, "That the Miracles which they ſhould ſoon ſee him perform, would declare the Divine Majeſty preſent with him; and giving him ſuch Commands, as he was to execute in his prophetic Office, as clearly and manifeſtly as if they had ſeen the Angels of God, aſcending and deſcending on him."

It is obſerved by ſeveral, that only Ezekiel in the Old Teſtament, and our Saviour in the New, are called by the Name of the Son of Man; that our Saviour is never ſo called, but by himſelf; and that this is the common Appellation that he gives himſelf. Ezekiel was doubtleſs ſo called, to diſtinguiſh him from thoſe ſpiritual Beings, with whom he ſo frequently converſed: And our Saviour took upon him that Title, not only to diſtinguiſh his human from his divine Nature, but to expreſs his Humility likewiſe, and want of Reputation, while he continued in the Form of a Servant. Chemnitius, however, puts another Conſtruction upon this Title: He thinks, that as the Term Meſſiah (which is commonly called Chriſt) was taken out of Daniel, ſo that other of the Son of Man is taken from thence likewiſe; for behold one "like the Son of Man (ſays the Prophet) came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days," Chap. vii. 13. and that therefore our Saviour did uſually call himſelf ſo, in Compliance to the Prophecy, as well as to aſſert his Humanity, and declare himſelf his Father's Servant, according to the Character given of him by Iſaiah xlii. 1.

In all Probability it was at ſome Relations Houſe, that the Marriage of Cana in Galilee was kept, becauſe Mary was ſo ſolicitous for the Supply of Wine; and the Opinion of the Antients is, that it was at the Houſe of Alpheus or Cleopas, who at this Time married his Son Simon the Canaanite, Matt. x. 4. though others will have it, that the Bridegroom was Nathanael.

The City of Capernaum is no where mentioned in the Old Teſtament, either under this, or any Name like it; and therefore it is not improbable, that it was one of the Towns which the Jews built after their Return from the Babyloniſh Captivity. It ſtood on the Sea-Coaſt, i. e. "on the Coaſt of the Sea of Galilee, in the Borders of Zabulun and Nepthalim," Matt. iv. 15, 16. and conſequently towards the upper Part thereof. It took its Name, no doubt, from an adjacent Spring of great Repute for its clear and limpid Waters, and which, according to Joſephus, is by the Natives called Capernaum. As this Spring might be ſome Inducement for the Building of the Town in the Place where it ſtood, ſo its being a convenient Wafting-place, from Galilee to any Parts on the other Side of the Sea, might

might be ſome motive to our Lord for his moving from Nazareth, and making this the Place of his moſt conſtant Reſidence. Upon this Account Capernaum was highly honoured, and is called by our Lord himſelf, " exalted unto Heaven," but becauſe it made no right Uſe of this ſignal Favour; it drew from him the ſevere Denunciation, that it ſhould " be brought down to Hell," Matt. xi. 23. which has abundantly been verified; for ſo far is it from being the Metropolis of all Galilee (as it was once) that it conſiſted, long ſince, of no more than ſix Fiſhermen's Cottages, and may perhaps be now totally deſolate.

The Feaſt of the Paſſover is ſo well known, and has been ſo fully explained at the Time of its firſt Inſtitution, Exod. xii. that we need only remind our Reader, that from the Word Paſach, which ſignifies to leap or ſkip over, the Jews gave the Name of Paſcha or Paſſover, to that great Feſtival which was annually appointed in Commemoration of their Coming forth out of Egypt, becauſe, the Night before their Departure, the deſtroying Angel, who ſlew the Firſt-born of the Egyptians, paſſed over the Houſes of the Iſraelites, which were marked with the Blood of the Lamb killed the Evening before, and for this Reaſon called the Paſchal Lamb. The Feaſt itſelf began on the fourteenth Day of Niſan, which is the firſt Month in their ſacred but the ſeventh in their civil Year, and anſwers, in Part, to our March and April; but as the Jews began their Days at ſix in the Evening, this Feaſt was to continue ſeven Days compleat, and ſo ended on the one and twentieth Day in the Evening.

As ſoon as our Saviour came to Jeruſalem, the firſt Thing he did, was to reform the publick Abuſe and Profanation of the Temple, occaſioned by the Shops which the Money-changers had ſet up, and the Beaſts which the Dealers therein uſed to bring into the Court of the Gentiles. This our Lord's Zeal for his Father's Honour they could not well brook; and therefore, with a Scourge made of Cords, he drove all the Sellers and Barterers from the ſacred Ground, overturned the Tables of the Money-changers, and commanded thoſe who dealt in Doves or Pigeons, to take away their Goods, and " make his Father's Houſe no longer a Houſe of Merchandize.

This extraordinary Procedure incenſed the Jews to ſuch a Degree, that they came and demanded of him, by what Authority he did theſe Things, and to give them ſome Evidence of his having a Commiſſion ſo to do: But to this he made no other Reply, than by foretelling his own Reſurrection, expreſſed in the Metaphor of the Temple, which they underſtood of the Temple at Jeruſalem, that had been ſix and forty Years a building, but he, of the Temple of his own Body, which, in three Days after they had ſlain, he promiſed to revive. Though therefore, at this Time, he refuſed to work any Miracle at the Inſtigation of the Jews, yet, ſhortly after, we find him working many, which ſurprized the whole City, and excited the Curioſity of one Perſon in particular, whoſe name

Name was Nicodemus (a conſiderable Man in the Grand Sanhedrim, and of the Sect of the Phariſees) to repair to him (but privately, and in the Night-time, for fear of being known) and to declare freely to him, "That he verily believed he was come immediately from Heaven, becauſe the Miracles which he wrought were a Demonſtration of it."

Hereupon our Bleſſed Saviour took Occaſion to let him know, that this Belief was not the only Qualification requiſite to become his Diſciple, and then proceeded to inſtruct him in the Myſtery of Regeneration, telling him, "That as no Production could tranſcend the Nature and Condition of its Parent; Fleſh, for Inſtance, though never ſo much diverſified, could ſtill produce no more than Fleſh; ſo this Formation of a new Creature was to be effected by different Principles, namely, by the Water of Baptiſm, waſhing away Sins, and by the Holy Spirit giving a Power and Efficacy to Men's Endeavours to do well; which Spirit bloweth where it liſteth, and is, as the Wind, certain in its Effects, but ſecret in the Principle and Manner of its Production."

This Doctrine of Regeneration (which to Nicodemus ſeemed ſo very abſtruſe) our Saviour proceeds to tell him, was no more, in reſpect of other Myſteries of the Goſpel, than the Earth is in Compariſon of the Heavens, and ſo goes on to acquaint him with Matters of a ſublimer Nature; with his Deſcent from Heaven, his Death, his Aſcenſion, and the Bleſſing of that Redemption, which he came into the World to accompliſh. He inſtructs him in the Love of the Father, the Miſſion of the Son, the Rewards of Faith, and the Glories of Eternity. He upbraids the Unbelieving and Impenitent, and declares the Difference between a pure and corrupt Conſcience, the Shame and Fears of the one, and the Confidence and Serenity of the other.

This is the Subſtance of our Saviour's Diſcourſe to Nicodemus, who afterwards proved a Convert; and no ſooner was the Paſſover ended, but our Lord, in Company with many of his Diſciples, who, by his miraculous Works, were convinced of his Divinity, went about the Province of Judea, making Proſelytes wherever he came, and cauſing them to be baptized by the Hands of his Diſciples, becauſe himſelf was employed in greater Affairs, viz. in teaching the People and relieving their Neceſſities.

John the Baptiſt had, at this Time, removed his Station from Bethabara to Ænon, a Place remarkable (as its Name imports) for Springs and Waters, and therefore of great Conveniency for baptizing. While he was there, a Diſpute happened to ariſe between his Diſciples and certain Jews, who were preſent, which of the Baptiſms, that of John, or that of Jeſus, was preferable? And when his Diſciples, by way of Appeal to John, came and acquainted him, that the Perſon of whom he had given ſuch honourable Teſtimony, received Proſelytes (and thoſe in vaſt Numbers) by the

ſame Ceremony of Baptiſm as he did, John repeated the ſame Teſtimony again, and reminded his Diſciples, how frequently he had told them, "That the Perſon, of whom they ſpake, was the Meſſiah, whom God had ſent into the World for the Salvation of Mankind, and himſelf no more than his Herald; and that his Miniſtry therefore was now going to decline, even as, upon the Approach of the Sun, the Glory of the Morning-Star decreaſes." And having ſaid many Things of the like Nature, to prove Jeſus to be the Son of God, and of Co-equality with the Father, he cloſed up his Commiſſion with theſe important Words, "He that believes on the Son, hath everlaſting Life; but he that believeth not on the Son, ſhall not ſee Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him."

John was at this Time in the Territories of Herod Antipas, and, as he was a Man of great Freedom of Speech upon all Occaſions, he was not afraid, when he came to Herod's Court, to reprove him for his many Enormities, and particularly for his cohabiting with Herodias, the Wife of his Brother Philip, who was ſtill living. This exaſperated the Woman againſt him, to ſuch a Degree, that, though Herod at firſt, had ſome Eſteem and Reverence for him, yet, by her malicious Inſtigation, ſhe prevailed with him to caſt him into Priſon, with a Purpoſe to have him deſtroyed, whenever ſhe could find out a proper Opportunity.

Let us now explain the foregoing Paſſages.

There were three Courts belonging to the Temple. The Court of the Prieſts, where the Altar of Incenſe ſtood: The Court of the Iſraelites, where Jews, that were clean, and the Proſelytes of Juſtice, i. e. thoſe who had embraced Circumciſion, and the whole Law of Moſes, met at their Devotion; and the Court of the Gentiles, where the unclean Jews, and the Gentiles, who owned the true God, without profeſſing Judaiſm, were permitted to come and worſhip. Now, under the ſame Pretext of having the Sacrifices near at hand, as well as out of a Contempt of that Court, where the Gentile Worſhippers were permitted to enter, the Prieſts for their ſordid Gain, had permitted Beaſts and Poultry to be brought within this Court, and Graziers and Huckſters (whoſe Buſineſs properly was in the Markets of Jeruſalem) to mix with People at their Devotions, which was an Abuſe very ſcandalous.

It may poſſibly be aſked how our Bleſſed Lord, with nothing but a Whip in his Hand, ſhould be able to execute this heroic Act upon a Multitude of People, who might ſuffer Damage in their Wares, and conſequently be in a Diſpoſition to reſiſt him? Now, whoever conſiders that our Saviour had done enough already to prove himſelf a Prophet ſent from God, and that the general Conceſſion was, that a Prophet thus ſent, had ſufficient Authority to rectify Diſorders; and if he remembers, at the ſame Time, the great Reverence that was conſtantly paid to the Temple, and what Titles of Honour and Reſpect were given it by God himſelf, cannot but allow, that the preſent

ſent Abuſe of it was abominable, our Saviour's Zeal in redreſſing it commendable; and that, from all thinking and diſintereſted Perſons, it would, conſequently, meet with Countenance and Approbation: Nor is it to be doubted, but that a Conſciouſneſs of Guilt, in the Profaners themſelves, might, in ſome Meaſure, contribute to their Submiſſion and Acquieſcence; even in the ſame Manner as his Enemies were ſtruck backwards, with a Senſe of their own Guilt, as well as the Majeſty of his Appearance, and fell down to the Ground, when they came to apprehend him in the Garden, John xviii. 6.

It was an Appointment of the Law, that every Man from twenty Years old and upwards, ſhould annually pay into the Treaſury of the Temple, in order to defray the Expence of the daily Sacrifices, the Sum of half a Shekel, Exod. xxx. 12, 13. This and the voluntary Oblations of People of all Ranks, occaſioned a Neceſſity of changing greater Coin into leſs, and very often of foreign Coin into that which was current in the Nation. Under the Pretence therefore of having Things near at Hand, the Prieſts took this Opportunity to gratify their Covetouſneſs, by letting out Places to Money-Changers, who to make up their Rent (which very likely was exorbitant) might extort from thoſe who came to them, or (as Origen imagines) give them baſe Money inſtead of good, and ſo make the Temple a Den of Thieves.

Whether it were the Prieſts, the Magiſtrates, or the common People, that put this Queſtion to our Saviour, it is certain that they do not in the leaſt pretend to juſtify the Prophanation, which he had thus reformed; and therefore their Principle ſeems to have been, "That let Corruptions and Abuſes in a Church be never ſo great, yet they were not to be reformed, but either by the ordinary Authority of the Magiſtrate, or by an extraordinary Authority from God. Such an Authority they were ready to acknowledge in Prophets; but then they inſiſted that thoſe, who pretended to this, and to have their Miſſion from God, ſhould be able to prove that Miſſion by ſome miraculous Operations." But how they came to put this Queſtion to our Lord, after they had ſeen his miracles, and knew that he claimed a divine Commiſſion, and had been told, "that the Works he had done in his Father's Name bore Witneſs of him, John v. 36. can be imputed to nothing but their Perverſeneſs and obſtinate Infidelity.

From Herod's beginning to rebuild the Temple, to the firſt Paſſover after our Saviour's Baptiſm, 'tis agreed, that the Time was exactly ſix and forty Years; but then Joſephus tells us, that the whole was finiſhed in nine Years and an Half. But this is to be underſtood of the grand Building only, ſince (according to the ſame Author) ſeveral new Works and Decorations were ſtill carrying on, and about eighteen Thouſand Men employed therein, even to the Time that young Agrippa was made King of Judea, which was about the ſixtieth Year of the Chriſtian Æra.

The Jews had a Maxim, or proverbial Speech among them, that the

" Sanctuary of Sanctuaries was the Meſſiah," and therefore there could be no Impropriety in our Saviour's calling his Body a Temple: For, if the Apoſtle calls our Bodies the Temple of God, as he does, 1 Cor. iii. 16. and 2 Cor. vi. 1, 6. how much more does that Title belong to the Body of Chriſt, in which the Fulneſs of the Godhead dwelt always, and inſeparably?

But are Miracles alone a Demonſtration of a Perſon's being ſent by God? Nicodemus was not ignorant of the Caution which Moſes had given the Jews againſt falſe Prophets, Deut. xiii. 1, &c. nor does he here ſpeak of Miracles in general, but of thoſe particular ones which Jeſus had done in the Time of the Paſſover; and theſe were ſo great in their Nature, ſo ſolid in their Proof, ſo beneficial in their Effects, and in their End ſo well deſigned to confirm a Doctrine, every way ſuitable to the divine Atributes, and to fulfil the Prophecies concerning the " Meſſiah, the Son of Righteouſneſs, who was to riſe with healing in his Wings," Mal. iv. 2. that there was the greateſt Aſſurance, that none, without an omnipotent Hand could do them. Not to ſay, that Nicodemus might have both examined the Doctrine, and enquired into the Life of Jeſus, before he made that Inference from his Miracles.

Some have imagined, from the ſeeming Abruptneſs of the Anſwer, which our Lord gives Nicodemus, that Nicodemus might have put ſome previous Queſtion to him (not recorded by the Evangeliſt) concerning the Means of attaining the Kingdom of God, i. e. eternal Happineſs, or of qualifying himſelf to be a Diſciple of the Meſſiah, for, in that Senſe the Kingdom of God is likewiſe taken. But (beſides that the Word anſwered does not always, in the New Teſtament, ſignify a Reply to a Queſtion already propounded, but very frequently no more, than the Beginning of a new Speech) the Connection between the Compliment which Nicodemus makes our Lord, and our Lord's Reply to it, will not be amiſs, if we can but ſuppoſe in the Words of this Implication;—" Thy Acknowledgment of my divine Miſſion and Authority, free and generous though it be, will not be ſufficient to render thee a Member of that Kingdom which I am going to ſet up; " for except a a Man be born again," i. e. renewed in his Mind, Will, and Affections by the Operations of the Holy Ghoſt, and ſo become a new Creature, " he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God," i. e. he cannot be a Chriſtian here, or a Saint hereafter."

Thoſe who make the Water and the Spirit, here-mentioned by our Saviour, one and the ſame Thing (which, to every common Reader, muſt, at firſt Sight, appear to be diſtinct) ſhould do well to conſider, that the Queſtion between Chriſt and Nicodemus was about what was requiſite to prepare a Man for " the Kingdom," i. e. God's Church, and make him Partaker of the Goſpel Bleſſings. Certain it is, that Baptiſm by Water was not only the common Method of receiving Proſelytes into the Jewiſh Church, but is declared likewiſe

wiſe by our Lord himſelf to be the ordinary Way of entering into his Kingdom, for "he that believeth and is baptized, ſays he, ſhall be ſaved," Mark xvi. 16. and therefore he gave Commiſſion to his Apoſtles, "to make Diſciples in all Nations by baptizing them," Matt. xxviii. 19. Nay, ſo far are the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit from ſuperſeding the Neceſſity of this Ordinance, that, in the Apoſtolick Age, we find them rather eſteemed a proper Pre-diſpoſition for it. For, when the Holy Ghoſt fell upon Cornelius and his Company, in the ſame Manner that it fell upon the Apoſtles in the Day of Pentecoſt, Acts xxxiv. 44. what is St. Peter's Inference from theſe miraculous Gifts? Is it that the Perſons, on whom they reſted, had no need of Baptiſm? No, but rather that theſe extraordinary Gifts were a full Evidence, that they were the proper Objects of it, for "can any one (ſays he) forbid Water, that theſe ſhould not be baptized? So far is the Baptiſm of the Spirit (even where it is undeniable) from excluding the Baptiſm of Water;" and ſo ſtrong a Proof is the Inſtance before us, that the Graces of the Spirit may be the Foundation of a juſt Claim to Baptiſm, but never (where the Sacrament can be had) a lawful Diſpenſation to any Man for the Refuſal or Neglect of it.

Our Bleſſed Saviour might well wonder at Nicodemus's Ignorance in the Point of Regeneration, when this was the common Notion of Proſelytiſm among the Jews, that he who was waſhed and circumciſed, was looked upon as a recens natus, an Infant new born: And when there were ſo many Paſſages in the Law and the Prophets, relating to this very Doctrine: For what elſe can the Meaning be of the "Circumciſion of the Heart," commanded by Moſes, Deut. x. 16. of the "Renewal of a clean and right Spirit," prayed for by David, Pſal. li. 10. of the "putting God's Law in the inward Parts," mentioned by Jeremiah, Chap. xxxi. 33. and the giving his People a new Heart, and a new Spirit, promiſed by God, Ezek. xxxvi, 26? Theſe, and many more, were Intimations of the Doctrine of Regeneration; but the Phariſees were ſo taken up with their Rites and Traditions, that they gave ſmall Attention to the ſpiritual Things of nearer and much greater Concernment to their Souls.

The Evangeliſt does no where mention the particular Place where our Saviour began his Baptiſm, but there is Reaſon to preſume, that it was ſomewhere about Jericho, becauſe there it was that John the Baptiſt firſt entered upon his Miniſtry; and becauſe it ſeems expedient, that he ſhould open the firſt Scene of his Office, where his Faithful Fore-runner had given ſuch glorious and advantageous Teſtimonies of him; and, in one and the ſame Place, compleat John's Baptiſm of Repentance for Sins (which was preparatory to his Coming) by the Baptiſm of Remiſſion of Sins, which he alone had proper Power to give.

Antipas, or Antipater (for they are Words of the ſame Signification) was the Son of Herod the Great, by one of his

his Wives named Cleopatra, a Native of Jeruſalem. In his firſt Will his Father, it is certain, named him Succeſſor to his Kingdom, but afterwards he changed his Mind, made his Son Archelaus King of Judea, and gave to Antipas the Title only of Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, which made him appeal to Auguſtus at Rome, in order to have his Father's former Will confirmed, and the latter reverſed, but he did not obtain his End.

Herodias was the Daughter of Ariſtobulus and Bernice, Siſter to King Agrippa, and Grand-daughter to Herod the Great. She was, at firſt, married to her Uncle Philip, Son of the ſame Herod by Mariamne, by whom ſhe had a Daughter named Salome, the ſame who pleaſed Herod ſo well in her dancing; and, how ſhe came to run from her Brother to live with another, Joſephus has thus related the Story, "Antipas, in his Paſſage to Rome, made ſome Stay with his Brother Philip, where he fell ſo paſſionately in love with his Wife Herodias, that he could not forbear expreſſing it to her, and promiſed her withal, that at his Return from Rome he would put away his own Wife and marry her. Upon theſe Conditions Herodias accepted of the Offer, and as ſoon as Antipas was returned, and his Wife gone (for ſhe having Notice of the Engagement between her Huſband and Herodias, made her Eſcape to her Father Aretas King of Petra) ſhe, with her Daughter Salome, left her Huſband Philip, and coming directly to Antipas, for ever after lived with him in a ſtate of Inceſt, Lev. xviii. 15. nor was her Ambition much leſs criminal than her Luſt; for, growing uneaſy to ſee her Brother Agrippa promoted to the Title of a King, while her new Huſband had no more than that of a Tetrarch, ſhe preſſed him ſo much that he determined to take a Journey to Rome, with an Intention to aſk the like Dignity of Caligula the Emperor; but the Emperor, being prejudiced by ſeveral Letters which Agrippa had written againſt Antipas, inſtead of advancing him, deprived him of his Tetrarchy, and condemned him to perpetual Baniſhment." The Emperor, underſtanding that Herodias was Agrippa's Siſter, ſhewed an Inclination to pardon her; but ſhe choſe rather to follow her Huſband in the Calamity ſhe had brought upon him, than to owe any Thing to her Brother's Fortune; ſo that they were both confiſcated, and baniſhed together, firſt into France, and afterwards into Spain, where they died.

The Evangeliſts have aſſigned the true Reaſon for the Baptiſt's Impriſonment; but, ſince the Phariſees, very probably, repreſented him as an Author of a Sect, a Promoter of Seditions and Rebellions, and a Perſon dangerous to the Government, by Reaſon of the Multitude of his Followers, Antipas craftily made this Pretence (as appears from Joſephus, lib. xviii. cap. 7.) for confining him; and the better to remove him from the People, ſent him bound out of Galilee into Patrea, to a ſtrong Caſtle called Macherus, near the Dead Sea, and towards the Borders

of

of Arabia, where he continued above a Year in Priſon.

Let us now return to the Story.

About the Time of John's Impriſonment, our Lord, who, by the Hands of his Apoſtles had been baptizing for near ſeven or eight Months in Judea, underſtanding that the Phariſees began to be envious at him, for the great Multitudes of People that reſorted to him, reſolved to leave that Province and paſs into Galilee, in order to enter upon the more ſolemn Part of his miniſterial Function. In this Journey it was neceſſary for him to paſs through Samaria; and, as he travelled on Foot, and the Weather was hot, when he came within a little of Sychar, he ſent his Diſciples into the City to buy Proviſions, and ſat himſelf down by the Side of a famous Well, called Jacob's Well.

While he was ſitting there, a Woman of a looſe Life and Converſation, came out of the City to draw Water; and when he requeſted ſome of her to drink, ſhe, perceiving that he was a Jew, took the Freedom to aſk him, how he could offer any ſuch Requeſt to a Samaritan, ſince there were ſo great Feuds, and ſo little Dealings between them and the Jews. Little did the Woman know the Excellency of the Perſon who aſked her ſo ſmall a Favour; but, in ſome meaſure to convince her, our Lord took Occaſion from hence, under the Metaphor of Water, to diſcourſe to her of ſpiritual Bleſſings, and to make her ſenſible of his Omniſcience, he reminded her of ſome Paſſages of her Life, particularly of the five Times ſhe had been divorced for her Adulteries, and of the State of Fornication, wherein ſhe then lived.

Convinced by this Diſcovery that he was a Prophet, ſhe propounded to him the great Queſtion, ſo much controverted between the Jews and Samaritans, viz. which was the proper Place of publick Worſhip, Gerizim or Jeruſalem? To which our Saviour, in his Anſwer, gives manifeſtly the preference to the Jewiſh Form and Place of Worſhip, but makes it a Queſtion of no great Moment, ſince the Time was approaching when all Sacrifices and ceremonial Rites ſhould ceaſe, and when God, who was a Spirit, expected to be worſhipped in a more rational and ſpiritual Manner, than hitherto he had been.

Our Saviour before he had done talking with the Woman, and juſt as his Diſciples were returned from the City, had informed her, that himſelf was the Meſſiah, whom ſhe ſpoke of; whereupon, leaving her Water-pots, ſhe ran into the City, proclaiming aloud, that ſhe had met with a Perſon, who had told her all the Secrets of her Life, and who could be no other than that great Prophet, who was to come into the World? So that the Inhabitants waited on him at the Well, invited him into their City, received him with great Civility, and, though ſome believed on him from the Teſtimony of the Woman, many more did ſo from their own Conviction, hearing his Sermons and Divine Diſcourſes.

After two Days ſtay in the City our Lord proceeded to Cana, where he changed

changed the Water into Wine, and where the Galileans, who at the Paſſover had ſeen the Miracles which he did at Jeruſalem, received him with great Reverence and Reſpect. Hither it was that an Officer belonging to the Court came and addreſſed himſelf to him with great Humility and Reverence, deſiring him that he would come and cure his Son, who was juſt at the Point of Death; and when, with more Importunity, he renewed his Requeſt, and our Lord, to ſhew the Excellency of his Power, that could cure in Abſence as well as in Preſence, diſmiſſed him with this kind Aſſurance, "that his Son was recovered;" the believing Father joyfully returning home, was, by the Way, congratulated with the welcome News of his Son's Recovery; and enquiring of his Servants the Hour when the Child began to amend, by the Account which they gave him he perceived, that it was at the very Inſtant when Jeſus had declared to him, "thy Son is well:" Whereupon both he and his whole Family, being convinced of our Saviour's Divinity, were converted to the Chriſtian Faith.

Several Reaſons may be aſſigned why our Saviour delegated the Office of baptizing to his Apoſtles. 1. Becauſe it was no ways proper for him to baptize in his own Name. 2. Becauſe the Baptiſm that was peculiarly his, was the "Baptiſm of the Holy Ghoſt," Acts xv. 3. Becauſe it was an Office of more Importance to preach the Goſpel than to baptize, 1 Cor. i. 17. And 4, Becauſe Chriſt's baptizing of any might poſſibly have occaſioned Diſguſts and Jealouſies among the Diſciples, in the ſame Manner, as, in the early Ages of the Church, we find People valuing themſelves, and deſpiſing others, upon their being baptized by ſuch or ſuch an eminent Apoſtle, 1 Cor. i. 12.

Galilee, is a Province of Paleſtine, which extends itſelf chiefly into the Northern Parts thereof. The Tribes which it contains, are Iſſachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, and Aſher, with Part (as ſome ſay) of Dan and Paræa, beyond the River Jordan. On the North, it is bounded by Lebanon and Syria; on the Weſt, by Phœnicia; on the South, by Samaria, and on the Eaſt moſtly by the River Jordan, and the Sea of Galilee. It is generally divided into two Parts, the Upper and the Lower Galilee, whereof the former is called "Galilee of the Gentiles," Matt. iv. 15. either becauſe it was chiefly poſſeſſed by the Gentiles, with Jews interſperſed among them, or rather, becauſe it bordered upon Gentile Nations, ſuch as the Phœnicians, Syrians, and Arabians. The whole Country (according to Joſephus) was fruitful and well cultivated, and the People laborious and induſtrious. The Number of its Towns and Villages was prodigiouſly great, and ſo well inhabited, that the leaſt of them did not contain leſs than fifteen Thouſand Souls. The Natives were a bold intrepid Race of Men, who defended themſelves bravely againſt the foreign Nations that ſurrounded them, but then their Wealth and Proweſs made

made them ſeditious, and very apt to rebel againſt the Romans, for which they ſuffered ſometimes very much.

Samaria is a Province of Paleſtine (ſo called from its City of the ſame Name, which was once the Capital of the Kingdom of Iſrael) which lies exactly between Judea to the South, and Galilee to the North, and extends itſelf from the Mediterranean Sea Weſtward, to the River Jordan Eaſtward, taking up the moſt conſiderable Part of what formerly belonged to the Tribe of Ephraim, and the Half-tribe of Manaſſeh, on the Weſt-ſide of Jordan.

Sychar is only a corrupt Pronunciation of Sychem, or Shechem, which is the Capital of the Country that was once called Samaria. At preſent it is called Naploſa, and ſtands in a narrow Valley, between Mount Gerizim on the South (at the Foot of which it is ſituate) and Ebal on the North. On Mount Gerizim they had once a Temple which ſeemed to rival that of Jeruſalem, but in the Time of the Maccabees it was deſtroyed by Hyrcanus, and what they have now is only a little Place of Worſhip, to which at certain Seaſons, they nevertheleſs repair for the Performance of the Rites of their Religion; but what thoſe Rites are, 'tis not eaſy to ſay. The whole Place, in ſhort, is ſtrangely decayed from what it was anciently; for it conſiſts now only of two Streets that lie parallel under Mount Gerizim, but is full of Inhabitants, and the Seat of a Baſſa.

It is much to be queſtioned, whether the Well, that is at preſent ſhown to Travellers for Jacob's Well, be that where our Saviour diſcourſed with the Samaritan Woman, becauſe it ſeems to be too remote from the Town for Women to come thither to draw Water: unleſs we may ſuppoſe that the City did formerly extend itſelf farther that Way, than it does now. However this be, the Well is covered with a ſmall Vault, into which you get down through a very ſtreight Hole, and then, removing a broad flat Stone, you diſcover the Mouth of the Well itſelf. It is dug in a firm Rock, about three Yards in Diameter, and thirty-five in Depth; and, to confute the Story which is commonly told to Travellers (that it is all the Year dry, except on the Anniverſary, when our Saviour ſat upon it, but that then it bubbles up with Abundance of Water) Mr. Maundrel tells us, that when they came to ſound it, they found no leſs than five Yards of Water in it.

The chief Reaſons of the Jewiſh Hatred againſt the Samaritans were theſe three, 1. The foreign Extraction of the Samaritans, they being moſt of them Deſcendants from the Cutheans, whom Salmanezar ſent to Samaria, when he carried away the Ten Tribes into Captivity, 2 Kings xviii. 9. 2. The Difference of their Religion and Worſhip, foraſmuch as that of the Samaritans was a Kind of Mixture of Jewiſh and Pagan Rites together; and, 3. The Rival Temple which the Samaritans had built on Mount Gerizim, and conſecrated to Jupiter Olympus, in order to avoid the Perſecution of Antiochus, Joſeph. Antiq. l. xii. c. 7 Theſe were the chief Cauſes of the Animo-

ſities between them; the Jews however did not carry their Reſentments ſo high, but that, in ſome Caſes, they would traffick or buy any Thing of them, but then the Phariſees came in with a Tradition, that they were not to borrow any Thing of them, nor receive any Kindneſs from them, nor drink of their Water, nor eat of their Morſels. This however our Lord deſpiſed, as having no Foundation either in the Law of God or Equity, and as tending to impair the Law of common Friendſhip and Humanity and therefore we find him aſking to drink with the Samaritan Woman, and afterwards going into the City and eating with the Sichemites.

The Words "Thou haſt had five Huſbands;" but whether five ſucceſſively, and from the Death of one another, or five from whom ſhe had been divorced for Adultery, is not agreed. The beſt modern Interpreters however judge, that ſhe had been married to five ſeveral Men, but ſo behaved herſelf towards them, that, for Adultery, or ſome other forward Behaviour, they had given her a Bill of Divorce. This ſeems more likely to be the true Senſe, than that, after the Death of five legal Huſbands, ſhe ſhould live in Whoredom, with a ſixth Perſon.

The Jews gave it out, that the Samaritans worſhipped God in the Image of a Dove, but this ſeems to be a mere Forgery upon them, 1. Becauſe among all the Idols which they worſhipped, when they came from Aſſyria, there is not the leaſt Hint of the Image of a Dove. 2. Becauſe Joſephus, who, in ſeveral Places of his Hiſtory, inveighs againſt them bitterly, does no where charge them with this Crime: And, 3. Becauſe it is a Thing utterly inconſiſtent with the Law of Moſes, which they embraced; for, as it forbids all Images, ſo it requires Men to ſacrifice the Dove to God; and ſurely nothing can be more abſurd, than to worſhip that which we are bound to ſacrifice. It was very likely therefore, that the Samaritans had no falſe Objects of Worſhip among them, and yet they, as well as the Jews, might not be furniſhed with right Apprehenſions of the true One. They both were to blame, no doubt, in confining the Worſhip of God to any particular Place, and thinking that he could not be rightly adored, but either at Gerizim, according to the one, or at Jeruſalem, according to the other, when his Preſence is certainly every where, and in every Nation, "he that feareth him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with him," Acts x. 35. They, as well as the Jews, might think, that God was pleaſed with outward Ordinances, with Sacrifices and Expiations, which "ſanctified only to the purifying of the Fleſh;" but perhaps they never ſuppoſed, that theſe Things were but Types and Figures of what was to ſucceed, and therefore to be of no longer Continuance than until the "Subſtance of the Things themſelves were come." They, doubtleſs, both had ſome Expectations of a Meſſiah, but perhaps it never entered into their Heads, that he ſhould be the Angel of the Covenant, who, with the Incenſe of his Blood, "ſhould offer

offer up the Prayers of all the Saints upon the Altar, that is before the Throne," Rev. viii. 3. So that our Saviour, by this Part of his Diſcourſe with the Woman, plainly intimates, that, after his Reſurrection, and the Promulgation of his Goſpel, not only the Jews and Samaritans, but People of all Nations whatever, ſhould have righter Notions of God, the only Object of religious Worſhip, of the Extent and Univerſality of his Church, of the Qualifications requiſite in true Worſhippers, and of the Mediator, appointed by God to introduce and enforce their Prayers.

The Impriſonment of John had put an End to his Miniſtry; and therefore, to ſupply that Loſs, our Saviour himſelf began to preach the Sum and Subſtance of the Goſpel, Faith, Hope, and Repentance, in the Province of Galilee; which he did in ſuch an extraordinary Manner, that he was admired by all, and his Fame ſpread through the whole Country. Coming however to Nazareth, the Place of his Education, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day, and when he ſtood up, and read (as the Cuſtom for Laymen was at that Time) a Paſſage in the Prophet Iſaiah, beginning with theſe Words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the Goſpel to the Poor," &c. which he applied to himſelf (but in general Terms) and ſpake thereupon with ſo much Gracefulneſs, that the Eyes of the whole Congregation were turned upon him, admiring his Diſcourſe; many, who had known him in the Diſadvantages of his Education, began to have abject Thoughts of him upon the Meanneſs of his Extraction, as if he had been no more than a Carpenter's Son; ſo that, taking an Occaſion to upbraid them with their Ingratitude and Inſenſibility, he ſo far provoked the whole Aſſembly, that they hurried him out of the City, and brought him to the Brow of the Hill on which it was built, with a Deſign to have caſt him down from thence, and deſtroyed him, had he not, by a miraculous Power, withdrawn himſelf from the Fury of theſe wretched People, and left their City.

This barbarous Treatment of the Nazarenes made our Saviour remove from them, and ſettle his Habitation in Capernaum, which was the Metropolis of Galilee, and, by Reaſon of the Lake which was near it, a Place highly convenient for his Deſigns. He had not long been here before great Multitudes flocked to him; and as he was walking one Day by the Side of the Lake, with a Crowd of People preſſing upon him, he ſaw two Fiſhing-Veſſels, one belonging to Peter and Andrew, and the other to James and John (who were all Partners and Companions in that Buſineſs) and ſtepping into Peter's Ship, he deſired him to put a little from the Shore, that from thence he might preach to the People.

That the Synagogue-worſhip was, at this Time, loaded with Rites and Ceremonies of human Invention, that the Prieſts were very defective in the Diſcharge of their Functions, and the Manners of thoſe who met there were

very much corrupted, no one can doubt, who is at all acquainted with the Scriptures and the Jewish History; and yet we find, that our Saviour and his Disciples (as Members of the Church of Nazareth) went constantly every Sabbath-day to these Synagogues, preserving thereby "the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace," and, upon slight Pretences, "not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the Manner of some is, Heb. x. 15.

What the Nature and Design of Synagogues were, and at what Time, and upon what Occasion they were at first erected by the Jews, is plain from their Use and Institution, and we need only take Notice here, that though every Synagogue had a settled Reader, to whom was allowed an annual Stipend, yet when any grave and learned Person came in (especially if he was a Stranger) it was customary to make him the Compliment of reading the Portion of Scripture appointed for the Day, Acts xiii. 15. which he always did in a standing Posture. For, as the Law was given with Reverence, say the Jews, so it is to be handled with Reverence; and when he had read what he thought fit, he might, if he was so disposed and qualified, expound or comment upon it. The Character, which John the Baptist had given of our Saviour, and the Miracles which he had lately done in Cana and Capernaum, might possibly excite the Curiosity of the Master of the Synagogue to hear him read and expound; read in Hebrew, and expound in Chaldee, as Ezra had introduced the Custom. In reading the Law, People were confined to the Lesson of the Day, but the Rabbins have observed, that in reading the Prophets there was a greater Licence allowed; and therefore, though our Saviour might read just where the Book opened, yet there seems to be a good deal of the Hand of God in directing him to a Place which related to himself, and gave him so fair an Opportunity of declaring the Purpose of his coming into the World, viz. to publish Redemption and Liberty, Pardon and Reconciliation with God.

Such kind of popular Executions as the Nazarenes intended for our Saviour, when they would have cast him from the Brow of the Hill, were then sometimes tolerated; and, under Pretence of Zeal for the Law, several were put to Death (especially in Times of publick Calamity, and when the Jews were in greatest Distress) without the Formality of Justice. But what made the Nazarenes so exceeding outrageous against our Saviour was, his declaring them unworthy of the Miracles he had done at Capernaum, his equalizing himself to some of the greatest of the ancient Prophets, and, by the Instances of the Sidonian Woman, and Naaman the Syrian, plainly intimating, that his Gospel would chiefly be received by the Gentiles.

How he got out of their Hands, when they had laid hold of him, the Scripture does not tell us; nor is it our Concern to be curious to enquire. We know very well that it was an easy Thing for him, who was God as well Man, to quit himself of any mortal Enemies:

Enemies: But how he did it, whether it was by blinding them for the preſent, or making himſelf inviſible, or merely by allaying their Rage, and changing their Wills, 'tis impoſſible to determine. Which Way ſoever he did, 'twas certainly ſomething miraculous, and therefore deprived the Nazarenes of the Liberty of complaining that he had done no Miracles among them.

The Lake, to which our Saviour retired, when he left the Nazarenes, which (according to Joſephus) is forty Furlongs in Breadth, and in Length an hundred, was, in the Times of the Old Teſtament, called the Sea of Chinnereth, Numb. xxxiv. 11. but the Writers of the New have given it three different Appellations. For, as it is called, the Sea of Galilee, from the Province of Galilee in general, ſo it is called the Sea of Tiberias, from a Town of that Name ſtanding on its Weſtern Shore; and the Lake of Geneſareth, from that particular Tract of Galilee, which bounded it a great Way, on the Weſtern Side. The Lake lies upon a Gravel, which makes its Water both of a good Colour and Taſte. It is ſofter than either Fountain or River Water, and withal ſo very cold, that it will not grow warm though ſet in the Sun in the hotteſt Seaſon of the Year. The River Jordan runs through the midſt of it, which ſtocks it with a great Variety of Fiſh, of a peculiar Taſte and Shape, not to be equalled in any other Place. In ſhort, it was a common ſaying among the Jews, that God loved the Sea of Galilee more than any other Sea; which ſo far holds good, that this Sea, above all others, was honoured with the Divine Preſence of our bleſſed Saviour, while he dwelt at Carpernaum, very frequently, and even once after he was riſen from the Dead.

St. Matthew and St. Mark, in their Relation of this Tranſaction of Chriſt's going into the Ship, are pretty uniform, but St. Luke differs from them ſo widely, that Interpreters have been at ſome Pains to reconcile them. For, whereas the two former tell us, that theſe Fiſhermen were caſting a Net into the Sea, St. Luke informs us, that they had gone out of their Ships, and had waſhed their Nets, beſides ſome other Variation in the Manner of the Call of the four Apoſtles. But not to enter into a minute Examination of Particulars, we ought to conſider that ſome Allowances are reaſonable and neceſſary to be made, for the Variations of Circumſtance in one Hiſtorian, who makes it his Buſineſs to recount Matters diſtinctly, and at large, and in another, whoſe Intention it is, only to declare Facts in general: without entering into the Series and Order of each Action. Now, this is the Caſe of the two former Evangeliſts: They deſigned no more than a ſummary Account of theſe four Apoſtles Call, and their Compliance with it; and therefore they contented themſelves with ſetting down apart, ſo much firſt, as relates to Andrew and Peter, and afterwards what related to James and John. But St. Luke, who propoſes to ſhew the Manner and whole Proceſs of the Call, records the Miracle at large,

and

and interweaves ſeveral remarkable Paſſages, which were not needful to be mentioned in the brief Account of St. Matthew and St. Mark, but highly conducive to St. Luke's Purpoſe of undertaking to deſcribe the miraculous Draught of Fiſhes, Luke v. 10. which, upon our Lord's Command to make a freſh Experiment, was taken.

Peter and his Companions had been hard at Work all Night, but without any Manner of Succeſs; and therefore when Sermon was ended, our Saviour ordering Peter to launch out farther, and to let down his Nets for a Draught, he modeſtly told him of their unſucceſsful toiling all Night, but, nevertheleſs in Obedience to him, he was willing: Nor had he Cauſe to repent, for, upon letting down the Nets they incloſed ſuch a Multitude of Fiſh, that their Tackle began to break, ſo that they were forced to call to their Partners in the other Ship, to come to their Aſſiſtance, becauſe the Draught was ſuch, that it loaded both the Veſſels ſo very deep, that they were in ſome Danger of ſinking before they got to Shore.

Amazed at this marvellous Sight, and dreading the viſible Appearance of ſo great and ſo divine a Power juſt by him, Peter threw himſelf down at our Saviour's Feet, deſiring him to depart from him, becauſe he was a Perſon no ways worthy of his Preſence. But our Saviour bid him be of good Comfort, and, from the preſent Incident took Occaſion to inform him, that he had a nobler Work and Employment for him, even the gaining of Mens Souls to Salvation, if he would adjoin himſelf to him; and having given the like Invitation to the only three, Andrew, James, and John, they all obeyed his Call, and leaving their Veſſels, Nets, Relations, and Employment, became, ever after, his conſtant and inſeparable Diſciples.

After the Choice of theſe four Diſciples, our Saviour returned with them into the City; and, on the next Sabbath-day, went into the chief Synagogue, and there preached to the People, with ſo much Force and Authority, and, in a Manner ſo widely different from their uſual Teachers, the Scribes, that all were aſtoniſhed at him; and to increaſe their Admiration, one in the Congregation, whoſe Body was poſſeſſed with an unclean Spirit, cried out in an hideous Manner, "Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jeſus of Nazareth? Art thou come to deſtroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God: But Jeſus, who wanted not the Teſtimony of ſuch Confeſſors, commanded his Silence, and Departure out of the poor Man's Body, which immediately was done, to the great Surprize and Amazement of all the Spectators.

From the Synagogue our Lord retired to Peter's Houſe, where his Wife's Mother lay ſick of a Fever; but upon his approaching the Bed-ſide, and taking her by the Hand, he commanded the Fever to depart, and that Moment reſtored her to ſuch perfect Health, that immediately ſhe aroſe, and (as if ſhe had never been ſick) waited on the Company. This, and the other Miracle in the Synagogue (as ſoon as the Sun

Sun was ſet, and the Sabbath ended) gathered all the City together about Peter's Houſe, bringing Demoniacks, and diſeaſed People of all Kinds, and begging the Relief of this heavenly Phyſician, who very readily cured them all, by a Touch only, or the Impoſition of his Hand.

The next Morning he retired very early into a private Place, that, being free from the Noiſe and Importunities of the Multitude, he might have an Opportunity to pray; but even in this Solitude he was found out; and therefore to diſengage himſelf from ſuch a Crowd of Attendants, he told his Diſciples the Purport of his Miſſion was, to preach the Goſpel in other neighbouring Cities; and, accordingly, leaving Capernaum, he made a Progreſs into Galilee, preaching in their public Synagogues, curing all Kinds of Diſtempers, and diſpoſſeſſing all Demoniacks that were brought to him.

We have ſeveral Inſtances, both in the Old and new Teſtament, of Perſons ſtruck with dreadful Apprehenſions at the Preſence of the Divine Majeſty, or even of ſome Angel, or a Prophet, delivering a Meſſage from him. And therefore Grotius ſuppoſes, that Peter's Caſe was much the ſame with that of the Widow of Sarepta, when ſhe complained to Elijah, "What have I to do with thee, O thou Man of God, art thou come unto me to call my ſins to Remembrance?" 1 Kings xvii. 18. But others moſt juſtly think, that Peter's Words are expreſſive rather of his high Sentiments of our Lord, and the Conſciouſneſs of his own Unworthineſs to be found in ſuch a Perſon's Company, and that therefore they do not a little reſemble that glorious Declaration of the Centurion in the Goſpel, "Lord I am not worthy, that thou ſhouldeſt come under my Roof, but ſpeak the Word only, and my Servant ſhall be healed," Matt. viii. 8.

The Words in our Tranſlation, "From henceforth thou ſhalt catch Men," in the Greek have ſomething remarkable. For it does not ſay, that Peter ſhould catch Men, as People generally do wild Beaſts or Fiſh, in order to kill them, and eat them; but that he ſhould take them alive, as ſuch Fiſh, and wild Creatures are taken, that are deſigned to be put in Stews and Parks; and therefore the Senſe of the Words is,—"Thou ſhalt be a Fiſher of Men," but ſuch a Fiſher, as ſhall preſerve them alive; as ſhall retrieve them, in ſhort, from Error, and Ignorance, and Death: and conduct them to Truth, and Knowledge, and eternal Life.

Towards the Concluſion of the firſt Chapter of St. John's Goſpel, we meet with a Call of ſome five of our Lord's Diſciples, about a Year prior to this; but, by the Account of the other Evangeliſts, it appears that they did not, at this Time, become our Saviour's conſtant Attendants, becauſe it is preſumable that though he took this Opportunity to make himſelf known to them, yet he had not as yet any immediate Occaſion for them, and therefore remitted them to their reſpective Trades. Only Philip is ſuppoſed to have remained with him from the very firſt, becauſe he ſeems not to have called him

him in a formal Manner as he did, at that Time, the reſt, John i. 43. and becauſe we find no farther Interview between him and Philip upon this Score, as there was between him and three, at leaſt, of the reſt, Luke v. 10, 11. Theſe three Diſciples therefore, viz. Andrew, Peter, and John, were twice called, but the former Calling was rather a Warning to hold themſelves in Readineſs for it, than an actual engaging them in his Service; but now in Philip we meet with no other Call, than what he had at firſt, and therefore, though the Fathers, and ſome ancient Writers, have given the Honour to St. Andrew of being the firſt called Diſciple; yet that Prerogative is evidently St. Philip's. For, though Andrew and Peter were the firſt that came and converſed with our Lord, yet we find them returning to their Trades again, and not ordained to their Diſcipleſhip, till after the Time that the Baptiſt was caſt into Priſon.

There are ſeveral Opinions, wherein the Excellency of Chriſt's Preaching, above that of the Jewiſh Doctors, did conſiſt. Some think, that his Teaching was not ſo much in the Manner of an Inſtructor, as a Legiſlator, and one who, in his own Name, had Power to propound the Terms of Life and Death. But though this, in Relation to Chriſt's Divinity, be certainly true; yet it is not ſo agreeable, either to his prophetic Office, or his frequent Declarations, "that the Doctrine, which he taught, was not his own, but his who ſent him; and that he ſpake not of himſelf, but as his Father had commanded him," John vii. 16, and xii. 49. Others imagine, that the Excellency of Chriſt's Preaching conſiſted in the Miracles, wherewith he confirmed his Doctrine; for ſo the Evangeliſt repreſents the Matter: "They all marvelled, ſaying, what is this new Doctrine, for with Authority he commandeth the unclean Spirits, and they obey him?" Mark i. 27. But becauſe another Evangeliſt tells us, that it was his Doctrine, without his Miracles that aſtoniſhed the People, Matt. vii. 29. others are of Opinion, that his Excellency lay in the graceful and lively Manner of his Delivery, not like the Teachers of the Jews, who read their Lectures of the Law ſo coldly, ſo perfunctorily, as never to affect the Hearts of their Hearers; and that, in ſhort, he ſpake as a Prophet, who had a full Commiſſion from God to deliver his Meſſage to them; not as the Scribes, who pretended only to deliver the Traditions of their Forefathers.

Thoſe, who are minded to depreciate our Saviour's Miracles, will needs perſuade us, that the Jews, having a Notion, that the Diſeaſes, whoſe Symptoms they could not Account for, were inflicted by Devils, whom God might employ to chaſtiſe Mankind, did therefore give the Name of Evil Spirits to ſeveral Diſtempers, which proceeded merely from natural Cauſes; that, of theſe Diſtempers, ſuch as had any Thing loathſome or nauſeous attending them, they generally called by the Name of an unclean Spirit; and that, becauſe Sepulchres, of all other Places, were

were reputed the moſt polluted, therefore, whenever any crazy or melancholly People took it in their Heads to frequent ſuch Places, they were always ſaid to be poſſeſſed with ſuch Spirits.

It may juſtly be made a Queſtion, whether the Devil, who poſſeſſed this Man, did actually know our Saviour to be the Son of God, as he pretended. There are two Evangeliſts who relate this Miracle, and, in the Concluſion of it, both tell us, that our Saviour "ſuffered not the Devils to ſpeak, becauſe they knew him to be the Chriſt," Mark i. 34. Luke iv. 41. but, notwithſtanding this, ſome Interpreters do not ſcruple to affirm the contrary, viz. That the Devil had no perfect Preception of our Lord's Divinity, until his Reſurrection from the Dead. The State of Humiliation which he choſe, the Obſcurity which he lived in, and the Perſecutions which he ſuffered, without ever employing his Power to repreſs them; the Care which he took to conceal his moſt renowned Actions, and to refer the Glory of them all to God alone, deceived the Devil, and kept him in Suſpence. For had he known Jeſus, ſay they, he would never have put it into the Heart of Judas to betray, or of the Jews to crucify him, ſince this was the proper Way to accompliſh Man's Redemption. But the anſwer to this is obvious,——That, though the Devil did know Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, yet he did not know the Myſtery of Man's Redemption. When he firſt aſſayed our Lord in his Temptations, he ſpeaks indeed in a different Manner, "If thou be the Son of God;" but, by his Defeat he ſoon perceived that his Antagoniſt was more than Man. Though therefore he perfectly knew him to be the Son of God, yet ſeeing him inveſted with our Nature, he might, very likely, be ſo far infatuated, as to think, that, by deſtroying his Humanity, he might poſſibly defeat God's great Deſign. For how ſublime ſoever we may ſuppoſe his intellective Faculties to be, yet the wonderful Work of Man's Salvation by the Death of Chriſt, the Apoſtle plainly tells us, is, what no finite Underſtanding could comprehend, until "God was pleaſed to make all Men ſee, what is the Fellowſhip of the Myſtery, which from the beginning of the World, hath been hid in God, to the Intent that now, unto Principalities, and Powers in heavenly Places, might be known, by the Church, the manifold Wiſdom of God, according to the eternal Purpoſe, which he purpoſed in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, Eph. iii. 9, &c.

Fevers are common Diſtempers, and very often cured by ordinary Means, ſo that the Nature of this Miracle did not lie in the Cure of an incurable Diſeaſe, but in the Manner of the Cure, which was with a Touch, the Suddenneſs of it, her Fever immediately left her; and the Perfectneſs of it, in that ſhe was able to riſe, and wait on the Company. This is ſaid to be Peter's Wife's Mother; and from hence it may be preſumed, that Peter, who was himſelf of Bethſaida, had married a Woman of Capernaum, and there lived with his Mother-in-law.

The curing of Diſeaſes, and the caſting

caſting out of Devils, were undoubtedly two diſtinct Things, and conſequently, is an Error in thoſe, who, in their Annotations upon the very Texts, where they are mentioned ſeparately, endeavour to perſuade us, that the Devils caſt out were only Diſeaſes.

In our Lord's Progreſs through Galilee, he met with a Man overſpread with a foul Leproſy, whom, upon his humble Petition, with one Touch he immediately healed, but at the ſame Time gave him ſtrict Charge not to diſcover it to any one, untill he had preſented himſelf before the Prieſt, and offered the Sacrifice that was appointed for a Teſtimony of his Cure: But the poor Man, out of the Abundance of his Joy, could not refrain from publiſhing it abroad, wherever he came, which ſtill increaſed our Saviour's Fame, ſo that he avoided returning openly into the City of Capernaum, leſt the Multitude of his Followers ſhould give ſome Umbrage to the State, and therefore, having finiſhed his Progreſs through Galilee (which laſted for almoſt three Months) he retired into a deſart Place, and there employed ſome Part of his Time in Prayer.

Upon leaving his Retirement, he went privately into Capernaum, but it was not long before he was diſcovered; and then there were ſuch vaſt Crowds of People gathered together to hear his Sermons, and to bring them that were diſeaſed, that the Houſe where he was, and all the Court-yard about it, were not ſufficient to contain them. In the Houſe were many great Perſons; Phariſees, and Doctors of the Law, from Jeruſalem and Judea, as well as Galilee; who, led thither by their Curioſity, ſat hearing his Diſcourſes, and obſerving his Miracles, when four Men came bearing a Paralytic on his Bed; but finding it impoſſible to paſs through the Throng, they ventured to uncover the Houſe, and to let down the ſick Man, Bed and all, into the very Room where he was ſitting.

Our Bleſſed Saviour, being not a little pleaſed with ſuch an Inſtance of their Faith and Reliance on his Mercy, was reſolved to cure the Man; and accordingly, he gave him an Abſolution from his Sins. This provoked the Indignation of the Scribes and Phariſees, as deeming him guilty of Blaſphemy, becauſe none, as they imagined, could forgive Sins but God alone. But he, knowing their ſecret Thoughts, firſt reproved their Cenſoriouſneſs; and then, by curing the Patient before them, plainly demonſtrated what Authority he had to forgive Sins. For though the Power of healing, be much inferior to that of forgiving Sins, yet, becauſe it is not as eaſy to impoſe a Cure upon the World, where Men's Senſes are Witneſſes, as Remiſſion of Sins, which is a ſecret and invincible Operation; therefore all the People, who were convinced, by their Eyes, of the Efficacy of Chriſt's laſt Words, "Riſe and Walk," were ſatisfied of the Truth of the former, "Thy Sins are forgiven thee," and accordingly they glorified the Almighty, who had manifeſted ſuch Power on Earth, and being filled with reverential Fear, declared that they had

had ſeen ſtrange and wonderful Things that Day.

The Leproſy was a Diſtemper very common among the Jews. It proceeding from a general Corruption of the Blood and Juices, rendered the Perſon tainted with it, extreamly loathſome and deformed; and, in hot Countries eſpecially, was, of all Diſtempers, the moſt ſpreading in the Body, and the moſt contageous to others. But then, with Regard to the Notions of the Jews, and their Law concerning it, it was ſtill more deteſtable. It ſeparated the Perſon infected with it, from all civil and religious Communion; it diſtinguiſhed him by all the outward Significations of Sorrow and Shame; it was generally looked upon as a Plague inflicted by God, for ſome enormous Crime; it was thought ſo far above the Power of Art, that the very Attempt to cure it by Medicine was eſteemed an impious Preſumption. In ſhort, it was dreaded as the higheſt of all legal Pollutions; and required a great Variety of Luſtrations, before the Patient could be reſtored to the Privilege of a Jew, Levit. xiii.

But how came our Saviour to run the Hazard of making himſelf unclean, Levit. v. 3. by touching one, that was manifeſtly ſo? Now, whatever the Law concerning the Leper's Uncleanneſs might be, it ſeems, as if the Prieſt, that officiated about him, was not affected by it, becauſe we find him directed to make ſo near an Examination and Inſpection into his Diſtemper, Levit. xiii. 14, &c. Aaron, we may obſerve, though he officiated about his Siſter Miriam in her Leproſy, is not ſaid to have contracted any Pollution by it; and therefore well might a much greater High-prieſt than Aaron, in Virtue of his Office, claim the ſame Immunity. But then, in Virtue of his Divinity, it was impoſſible for him to incur any legal Uncleanneſs: As therefore the Effect wrought upon this Leper, was a plain Demonſtration, that the Finger of God was in it, and he conſequently approved of the Action, ſo the Jews make it a received Rule, that a Prophet might vary from, and even change the Ritual Law: And, from hence we may infer, that as Elijah and Eliſha both might touch the dead Children whom they raiſed to Life again, without any Imputation of Uncleanneſs, 1 Kings xvii, 19. and 2 Kings iv. 34. ſo might our Saviour touch this Leper; though the Opinion of ſome is, that he did not properly touch him as a Leper, becauſe the Moment that he ſtretched out his Hands, the Leproſy was cured; but if it were not, the Obſervation of Theophylact ſtill ſtands good, viz, That our Lord might touch the Leper, in order to ſhew, that it was not neceſſary to obſerve thoſe leſſer Matters of the Law; that touching an unclean Perſon did not defile one that was pure himſelf; and that the only Thing, indeed, that did defile, was the Leproſy of the Soul.

If it be aſked, Why our Saviour ſhould ſo often command the concealing of his Miracles? We may aſſign for Reaſons, not only his Modeſty and great Humility, that there might be no Appearance of Oſtentation in him, and that the Jews might have no Pretence to accuſe him of "ſeeking his

own glory," Matt. xii. 16. but becauſe, at this Time, it was not proper to irritate the Scribes and Phariſees (who had already made him quit Judea) too much. He knew, that in ſuch a determinate Space they would bring about what God in his Counſel had decreed: In the mean Time, "he was to work the Work of him that ſent him, while it was Day, John ix. 4. and to propagate his Goſpel, as much as poſſibly he could, both among the Jews and Gentiles; which could not have been conveniently done, if the Greatneſs of his Miracles had once provoked the Malice and Envy of his Enemies, to make their utmoſt Oppoſition againſt him. He knew likewiſe the mad and capricious Humour of the Multitude, and had Reaſon to apprehend "that they might come and take him away by Force, and make him a King," John vi. 15. if all his Miracles had been blazed abroad, before he had ſufficiently inſtructed them in the ſpiritual Nature of his Kingdom. As therefore he was far from being a Friend to Popularity, or Sedition, he deſired that ſeveral of his Miracles might be ſuppreſſed; leſt any bad Conſequences ſhould attend the Publication of them, until his own Reſurrection from the Dead ſhould be an undeniable Proof and Confirmation of all the reſt. And this I take to be the Reaſon of his referring the Phariſees, when they came to demand a Sign of him, to that of the Prophet Jonah, Matt. xii. 39. whereby he implied, that he would uſe no more Means for their Conviction, until, by the Miracle of his Reſurrection, his divine Power, and the Completion of the antient Types and Prophecies ſhould be ſo evidently manifeſted as to leave them without all excuſe.

The Prieſthood, at this Time, was much degenerated from its primitive Inſtitution, and many human Rites and Ordinances were added to God's Law, concerning the Prieſt's Examination of the Leper, who pretended to be clean; and yet our Lord ſent this Leper to ſubmit to all theſe new-invented Ceremonies, as knowing, that though they did indeed corrupt, yet they did not extinguiſh the divine Inſtitution. The divine Inſtitution was no more than this, That when a Leper was cured, he was to appear at the City Gate, and the Prieſts were to examine whether he was truly healed, or no; if he was, the Prieſt received him into the City, and by Degrees into the Temple, whither he ſhould bring two clean Birds of any Kind (the marginal Note ſays Sparrows) and having made a Bunch of Cedar and Hyſſop, mixed together, ſhould tie them with a ſcarlet Ribbon made of Wool; that to this Bunch of Cedar and Hyſſop one of theſe Birds ſhould be faſtened alive, and the other killed by the Leper that was cured, and its Blood received in a Veſſel, filled with Water; that when this was done, the Prieſt ſhould take the Bunch with the live Bird, and having dipped both in the Water, tinged with the Blood of the other Bird, ſhould ſeven Times ſprinkle the Leper with it; and that, after this, the live Bird ſhould be let looſe to fly where it would,

and

and the Perſon thus healed and purified, ſhould again be admitted to the Society of the Healthy, and a Communion in religious Offices, Levit. xiv. 1, &c.

Various are the Senſes in which the Words, " a Teſtament to them" are taken; for they may ſignify that the Gift or Oblation, which the Leper was to carry, would be a Means to evince the the Perfection of his Cure, when the Prieſts had examined and admitted it as ſuch; that this would likewiſe be an Evidence to the People, who ſtood by at that Time, and ſaw him cured, when they ſhould hear that the Prieſt had pronounced him clean; a Proof to the Prieſts, that himſelf was an Obſerver of the Law, by requiring his Patient to comply with the Ceremonies of it: and a full Demonſtration that he was a Prophet come from God, ſince they themſelves owned that a Leproſy could only be cured by the Finger of God.

The Word Paralytick, in the Greek, ſignifies to reſolve or relax, and ſeems to imply that this Diſtemper is a Relaxation of the Nerves, though it ſometimes proceeds from other Cauſes. It is always attended with great Weakneſſes and Obſtructions of the Blood and Juices, which deprive the Limbs of their Motion, and ſometimes occaſion great Pain. This Diſtemper is reckoned above the Power of all Medicines to remove; and yet our Saviour cured it ſeveral Times, merely by a Word ſpeaking.

But how could they poſſibly uncover the Houſe, to let down the Paralytick into the Room where Chriſt was, when they could not ſo much as get to it, much leſs get upon it, by Reaſon of the Throng that was before the Door? Now to have a right Notion of this Matter, we muſt obſerve, that the Houſes in Judea were, for the moſt part (even as they are to this Day) low built and flat roofed, and ſurrounded with a Battlement about Breaſt high, according to God's own Injunction, Deut. xxii. 8. ſo that to go up to the Top of their Houſes, the Jews had two Ways; one by a Pair of Stairs within the Houſe, leading up to a Trap-Door, which lay even with the Roof; and the other on the Outſide of the Houſe by a Ladder, or Pair of Stairs rather, either fixed or moveable, by which they could aſcend to the Roof, when they pleaſed, without ever going into the Houſe itſelf. Since this then was the general Faſhion of Jewiſh Houſes, we need not doubt, but that at Capernaum was of the ſame Figure and Make; and therefore the Bearers of the Paralytick, finding that they could not come at the Door, by Reaſon of the Crowd, bethought themſelves of another Expedient. They went round a private Way, and coming to the Stairs, which ſtood on the Outſide of the Houſe, up theſe they carry him, and preſently gain the Top. But finding the Trap-Door (or Way of the Roof as the Jews call it) ſhut againſt them, they immediately go to Work, and forcing it open (which St. Luke calls " uncovering, or breaking up the Roof," Chap. ii. 4. becauſe the Door, which lay even with the Roof, when

when let down and ſhut, was reputed a Part of it) they conveyed him down that Way, which St. Luke calls letting him down through the Tiling, i. e. through the Roof, which (except where the Door was) was all paved with large Tiles; and by this Means they found it no difficult Matter to place him in the Midſt before Jeſus.

Some have ſuppoſed, that becauſe the Hiſtory makes no Mention of any Faith, but that of the Friends and Bearers of this impotent Man, that therefore the Patient himſelf had no Part in that virtuous Diſpoſition, which inclined our Saviour to compaſſionate him; and thence they infer, how far a Man may be benefited by the Faith and Interceſſion of others in his Behalf. But it is a Miſtake to think that the Words, their Faith, exclude that of the ſick Perſon: For had he not been perſuaded that Chriſt was able to cure him, he would never have ſuffered himſelf to be preſented to him, in a Method ſo troubleſome to his weak Condition. We read, indeed, of no Petition that he made to our Lord, but the Violence of his Diſtemper might poſſibly have deprived him of the Uſe of Speech; or if it had not, the very Spectacle of a Body ſo debilitated, the Manner of the Action, and the Fatigue which he muſt have undergone in it, all ſpoke for him, and carried a more moving Eloquence, than it was poſſible for any Tongue to utter.

The Jews were of this Perſuaſion, That every Diſeaſe of the Body (thoſe eſpecially which were of a grievous Nature) were ſent upon Men for the Puniſhment of their Sins; and though they might carry this Maxim too far, John ix. 3. yet ſure it is, that the Scriptures repreſent moſt of the Calamities of Life, as the natural Effect of Mens Iniquities. And therefore ſome have obſerved, that as the Word Sins, is frequently put for the Puniſhment of Sins, our Saviour's forgiving the Man's Sins, was no more than a Declaration of his Intention to cure his Diſtemper: Whereas it is plain, that our Saviour ſpeaks of them, as two diſtinct Things, when he puts the Queſtion to the Company, "Whether it is eaſier to ſay, Thy Sins be forgiven thee, or to ſay, Take up thy Bed and walk," Matt. ix. 4.

The Word Blaſphemy, in Heathen Writers, ſignifies no more than Slander, or Calumny, or opprobrious Language of any Kind, ſuch as tends to impair a Man's good Name; but, in the ſacred Stile, it means unworthy and injurious Talk concerning God's Nature or Attributes, as when we aſcribe to him ſuch Qualities as belong not to him, or rob him of thoſe that do: aſcribing to him the Infirmities of Man, or to Man the Perfections of God. This is the Nature of the Sin, and the Puniſhment of it, under the Law, was ſtoning without the Gates of the City, Levit. xxiv. 15, 16.

While our Lord continued at Capernaum, he went out one Day (as frequently he did) to the Lake-ſide, and finding one Matthew, otherwiſe named Levi, the Son of Alpheus, a rich Publican, ſitting in his Office, he called him to be one of his Diſciples, who immediately forſook his gainful Employment,

ployment, and afterwards became both an Apoſtle and Evangeliſt. Within a few Days after his Converſion, Matthew invited our Saviour and his Diſciples, and, among others, ſome of the Profeſſion which he had forſaken, to the Feaſt. The Scribes and Phariſees (who accounted all in a Manner Sinners, beſides themſelves, but more eſpecially theſe Publicans) began to expoſtulate with theſe Diſciples, how it came to paſs that their Maſter, who ſet himſelf up for a Preacher of Righteouſneſs, and a Reformer of others, came to be ſo intimate with theſe lewd and loſt Wretches, as to ſit and eat with them at the ſame Table: But when our Saviour undertook the Argument, he gave ſo fair an Account of the Reaſons for his converſing with theſe People, as made the very Objection become his Apology. But all this would not content the Phariſees, and therefore joining with ſome of John's Diſciples, that were then preſent, they came and demanded of him, why it was that his Diſciples obſerved no Faſts, when they, and John's Diſciples were known to keep many? To which he replied, "That it was not a proper Seaſon for the Friends of the Bridegroom to faſt and afflict themſelves while they had the Bridegroom's Company, but when they were deprived of it; and that it would be as imprudent and prepoſterous a Thing, to impoſe rigorous Auſterities upon his Diſciples (who were but Novices in Religion, and inured to another Way of Life) as it would be to ſew a Piece of new Cloth upon a rotten Garment, which, upon any Streſs, would make the Rent worſe, or to put new Wine into old Leathern Bottles; which, upon the leaſt Fermentation, would both burſt the Bottles, and deſtroy the Liquor; but ſee the Tyranny of Cuſtom, and how difficult it is to change an inveterate Habit; in that none having drank the old Wine deſireth the new, for he ſaith the old is better.

Grotius, and thoſe that follow him, are of Opinion, that the Levi mentioned Luke v. 27. is not the ſame with Matthew, in Matt. ix. 19. becauſe Matthew never calls himſelf Levi, nor does Mark or Luke ever call Levi, Matthew. But the Anſwer to this has long ſince been given by St. Jerom, on Matt. ix. 9. viz. that the other two Evangeliſts (as their Charity and good Nature became them) endeavoured to cover the Infamy of their Brother's former Way of Life, and therefore never call him the Publican, leſt they ſhould ſeem to reproach him with the Remembrance of his former Converſation, but ſpeak of him under his other Name; though he, out of his great Humility, in the the Goſpel written by himſelf, does not only take the more commonly known Name of Matthew, but adds that odious title likewiſe of Matthew the Publican. Since then the Cuſtom of having more Names than one, is known to have prevailed among the Jews; and, as St. Mark calls him Levi the Son of Alpheus, ſo Matthew, in all Church Hiſtory, is ſaid to be the Son of one of the ſame Name; and the Hiſtory of the Perſon, Levi in Mark and Luke, agree ſo exactly, with what

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is ſaid of him, who in the other Evangeliſt is called Matthew, that there is not one circumſtantial Difference to be perceived, we cannot but conclude, that this Matthew and Levi were one and the ſame Perſon.

The old Enemies of our Religion, Julian and Porphyry, accuſed Matthew of Folly and Inconſiderateneſs, in following a Man whom he knew nothing of. But St. Jerom's Reply is, That he could not want a ſufficient Knowledge both of our Saviour's Doctrine and Miracles before his Call. The Publicans we find were great Frequenters of the Synagogues and other Places where our Saviour taught; and of all others expreſſed the greateſt Eagerneſs to be inſtructed by him; and therefore, if Matthew was of the ſame Diſpoſition, he could not want Opportunities of being acquainted with our Saviour's Preaching; and of the wonderful Works which he did every where; but more eſpecially of thoſe at Capernaum, it was impoſſible for him to be ignorant. It is very probable, therefore, that Matthew, upon ſuch Conviction, was inclinable to become one of our Saviour's Diſciples, even before he called him. But if he was not, the Luſtre and Majeſty of the Divinity, hid under the Manhood, but ſhining conſpicuouſly in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt, was enough to attract every one that he caſt his Eyes upon; at leaſt that powerful Impulſe, which he, to whom all Hearts are open, knew how to inject into Matthew's Breaſt, could not fail to do it; and from this ſupernatural Movement, doubtleſs it chiefly was, that ſo readily, and without Heſitation, he left all and followed Chriſt.

Nor was it only among the Jews, but among the Heathens likewiſe, that the Name of a Publican was infamous. For, according to their Writers, they were accounted no better than Thieves and Cheats; for Violence and unpuniſhed Rapine, and ſhameleſs Covetouſneſs were their public Profeſſion. And it is ſaid of Theocritus, that being aſked, Which was the cruelleſt among the Beaſts? his Reply was, "That of thoſe in the Mountains, the Bear and the Lion, but of thoſe in the City, the Publicans and Sycophants."

The Arguments which our Saviour uſes to the Phariſees for his keeping Company with Publicans and Sinners, are theſe three: Firſt, "They that are whole, need not a Phyſician, but they that are ſick," Matt. ix. 12. by which he intimates to them, that in converſing with ſuch ſort of Perſons, he was about the Diſcharge of his proper Buſineſs; and that, as a Phyſician's Profeſſion did ſometimes call him among Patients that had the moſt virulent Diſtempers; ſo he, whoſe Office it was to heal Souls, ought not to refuſe his Aſſiſtance to thoſe, whoſe Circumſtances moſt of all wanted his Help and Advice. Secondly, God's ſaying, in the Prophet Hoſea, vi. 6. "that he ſhould have Mercy," meaning thereby all the kind Offices, whereby we promote our Neighbour's Advantage, rather than Sacrifice, i. e. the Rites and Ordinances of the ceremonial Law; whereby

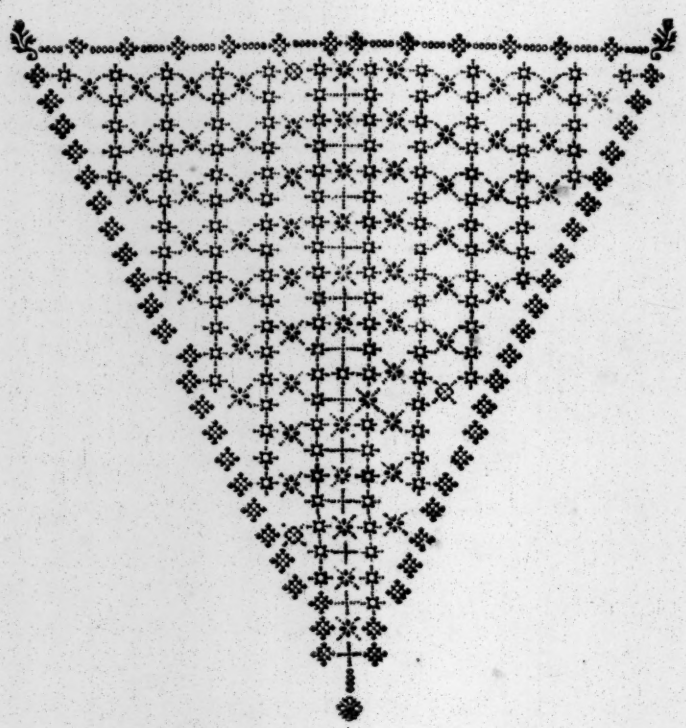
whereby he taught them, that though theſe latter might, in their due Place and Seaſon, be acceptable to God, yet Charity to the Souls of Men (which was the higheſt Act of Mercy, and that wherein he was then employed himſelf) was much more eſteemed by him. Thirdly, That "he came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance," or that the great Deſign of his Appearance in the World was, to change the corrupt Manners and Diſpoſitions of Men; a Change, which the Righteous ſtanding leſs in need of, ſhould no more grudge the Opportunities of it to Sinners, than the healthful ought to think themſelves diſparaged, when the Phyſician forbears his Viſits to them, which he makes to the Sick. Some Commentators however have obſerved, in this laſt Argument, a ſevere Irony, and thus they expound it, "I am not come to cure thoſe that think themſelves well, nor to ſave thoſe that account themſelves righteous, as you Phariſees ſeem to do; but I am come to cure thoſe who find themſelves ſick, and are ſenſible oft he Burthen of their manifold Iniquities, as theſe Publicans ſeem to be.

Beſides the public Faſts appointed by the Church, the Phariſees in general did faſt two Days every Week, and thoſe of more Strictneſs than ordinary, four. The Diſciples of John too, who was a Man of ſuch Abſtinence, that our Saviour ſays of him, "he came (comparatively) neither eating or drinking, Matt. xi. 18. did, no doubt, in a great Meaſure, follow the Example of their Maſter; and now, that he was confined in Priſon, might, very probably, double their Faſts, and their Prayers to God for his Deliverance. And if they and the Phariſees were able to do this, why ſhould the Diſciples of Chriſt be deemed inſufficient? Now to this it may be anſwered, that among the Jews, there were not only the Sects of Eſſenes and Phariſees, who led an auſtere Life, but alſo Schools of the Prophets, many of whom were Nazarites, and conſecrated to the Service of God; and that beſides theſe, the Jews had likewiſe academical and private Schools, from whence might come Diſciples to John, and the Phariſees already trained up to Faſting and Pennance, and other ſevere Duties of Religion. But now it is certain, that the Diſciples of our Lord were choſen from their Fiſhing-trade, and ſo came to him wholly unacquainted with, and unfitted for theſe Auſterities, which, to impoſe upon them now, was not neceſſary: Becauſe his Continuance among them was not to be long, and after his Departure they would have Occaſion more than enough, to exerciſe theſe, and many more painful Duties in the Propagation of the Goſpel, and the Perſecutions which would attend it.

The Baptiſt, in his Diſcourſe to his Diſciples, had compared our Saviour to a Bridegroom, and himſelf to his Friend or chief Gueſt, John iii. 29. and therefore, as our Saviour deſignedly makes uſe of the ſame Alluſion, his Argument runs thus, "I am the Bridegroom, and my Church is my B as long as I am here, laſts t

riage-Feaſt, and my Diſciples are the Children or Friends of the Bridegroom, and ſo are not to mourn, but to rejoice with me, while this Time laſts: But at my Death and Departure, this Bridegroom ſhall be taken from them, and then will it be time for them to faſt and mourn.

The Bottles which were in the Eaſt, and at this Time are very common in France, were not made of Glaſs, as ours are, but were certain Bags made of Goat-ſkins, having the Hair on the Inſide, and being well pitched and ſewed together. They are very good Veſſels to preſerve Wine, Oil, or any other Liquor in; and in this reſpect, more eſpecially, very convenient to carry from Place to Place, becauſe fall they never ſo often, they will not break, unleſs they be very old or decayed. In which Senſe our Saviour compares his Diſciples, before the Deſcent of the Holy Spirit upon them, to old Bottles, becauſe they were not capable either of comprehending or practiſing all that Perfection which he came into the World to teach Mankind.



CHAP. II.

From the Beginning of the Second Paſſover, to our Lord's Tranfiguration. In all one Year and about four Months.

OUR Bleſſed Saviour was now in the ſecond Year of his publick Miniſtry, when the near Approach of the Paſſover (which was the ſecond after his Baptiſm) called him to Jeruſalem. On the South-eaſt Side of the City, there was a famous Pool, and an Hoſpital called Bethesda, which conſiſted of five Porticoes, in which lay a great Multitude of poor impotent People, with Diſtempers of all Kinds, waiting for the moving of the Water; for, at certain Times, an Angel came from Heaven, and putting the Pool in a Fermentation, conveyed ſuch a medicinal Virtue into it, that the firſt Perſon who entered it, after ſuch Commotion, was cured of whatſoever Diſtemper he had. On the Sabbath-Day our Saviour came to this Place; and ſeeing a poor Paralytick, who had been in that Condition for the Space of eight and thirty Years, and lain there a long while in Expectance of a Cure, but all in vain; becauſe, whenever the Water was moved, ſome one or another always ſtepped in before and prevented him; he immediately healed him with a Word ſpeaking; and, at the ſame Time, ordered him to take up his Bed and walk Home: But, while he was doing this, the Jews exclaimed againſt him for bearing a Burthen on the Sabbath-Day, which was directly contrary to their Law. The Man excuſed himſelf, by declaring that the Perſon who had miraculouſly cured him, commanded him ſo to do, which he thought a ſufficient Warrant: But when they underſtood that it was Jeſus, they brought him before the Sanhedrim, with a Deſign to take away his Life, as an open Profaner of the Sabbath. Here, in Defence of himſelf, he alledged, "That ſince God (from whoſe Reſt they took the Obſervation of the Sabbath) did, on that Day, and all others, exerciſe the Works of Providence, Preſervation, and Mercy, there could be no Reaſon, why he, who was his Son, and inveſted with full Authority from him (as he proves immediately in a ſet Speech before the Council) might not employ himſelf on the Sabbath, as well as any other Day, in Actions of

the like Nature:" This provoked the Jews ſtill more and more againſt him, for they looked upon him now not only as a Sabbath-breaker, but a Blaſphemer likewiſe, who, by making himſelf the Son of God, had claimed a Co-equality with him.

Before we proceed, let us ſee what the Learned have ſaid on ſome of the foregoing Paſſages.

From the Time that our Lord firſt began his Miniſtry, to the Concluſion of it, there had been four Paſſovers held at Jeruſalem; all except the laſt, are not mentioned by the three firſt Evangeliſts, but St. John has been mindful to ſet every one down; the firſt, Chap. ii. 13, the ſecond, Chap. v. 1. the third, Chap. iv. 4. and the fourth, Chap. xiii. 1.

The Word tranſlated Pool, ſignifies any Pool or Head of Water, that is deep enough for a Man to ſwim in: But as in hot Countries more eſpecially, the Uſe of conſtant bathing was highly neceſſary, for which Purpoſe it was uſual, in every great City, to have publick Baths erected, ſome have imagined that this Pool was a large Baſon of Water of this Kind; and that the Porticoes about it were Places made for the Conveniency of dreſſing or undreſſing, in the Shade, for thoſe that are minded to bathe. However this be, it is certain, that in antient Times there were two Pools within the Compaſs of the Mount on which the Temple ſtood, the one called the Upper-pool, 2 Kings xviii. 17. and the other, The Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, Nehem. iii. 15. That St. Jerom (who himſelf had been at Jeruſalem) makes mention of two Reſervoirs, one filled with the Rains that fall in Winter, and the other with Water of a deep red Colour, as if it ſtill contained a Tinge of the Victims that formerly were waſhed in it; and that Mr. Maundrel, in his Travels, Page 107. tells us, that when he was there, he ſaw ſtill remaining, what was reputed the Pool of Bethesda, whereof he gives us the particular Dimenſions.

Some will have the Word Bethesda to ſignify a Drain or Sink-houſe, becauſe the Water which came from the Temple, and the Place where the Victims were waſhed, by ſubterraneous Paſſages ran into it; but moſt Interpreters expound it a Houſe of Mercy, ſo called, ſay ſome, becauſe the erecting of Baths was an Act of great Kindneſs to the common People, whoſe Indiſpoſitions, in hot Countries, required frequent bathing, though the Generality rather think, that it more properly had that Name from God's great Goodneſs ſhewn to his People, by giving this healing Virtue to theſe Waters.

The Greek Word which we render Infirmity or Weakneſs, is, indeed, a general Name for almoſt all Diſtempers; but here it is ſo limitted in its Signification, by the Circumſtances occurring in the Man's Hiſtory, that it can properly denote no other Diſeaſe than what we call a confirmed Palſy: For, beſides that, the Symptoms of no other Diſtemper do ſo exactly agree with the Deſcription of this Infirmity, both in Point of its long Continuance, and extream Weakneſs; the very Word Weakneſs,

neſs, in its moſt obvious Senſe, anſwers exactly to ſuch a Relaxation of the nervous Syſtem, as the Palſy is known to be, and (what is no mean Circumſtance) our Saviour makes uſe of the ſame Form and Method of Cure to this very Man, that he applies to another Paralytick, " Riſe, take up thy Bed and walk," Matt. ix. 6.

If it be aſked, How it came to paſs that of the Multitude of infirm People, who lay at this Pool, our Saviour ſhould think fit to cure but one? The Anſwer is obvious, becauſe he was an Object moſt to be compaſſionated of any in the Place, not only becauſe he was too feeble to ſtep into the Water himſelf, and too poor to have any to aſſiſt him; but, more eſpecially, becauſe he had been now a long while in this Condition, and yet ſtill depended upon the good Providence of God for an Opportunity to be cured at one Time or other. To cure at once whole Multitudes, indeed, ſounds more popular, and carries the Face of more extenſive Goodneſs; but beſides that, our Saviour might, in this Caſe, very probably, conform to the Rule of Cure eſtabliſhed providentially at Bethesda, which was to heal but one Perſon at one Time; his great Deſign, in every Action of this Kind, was to prove his Character and Commiſſion from God; to which End one ſingle and inconteſtible Miracle was as ſufficient an Evidence as a Thouſand. The ſhort is, ſince our Lord was at Liberty to do what he would with his own, or to beſtow his Favours where he pleaſed, his Goodneſs was conſpicuous, in chuſing the moſt helpleſs Object, and his Wiſdom no leſs manifeſt, in leaving the reſt to the ſtanding Miracle of the Pool.

It is very obſerveable, that whenever our Lord did any Miracle, he generally adjoined ſome Circumſtance or other to denote the Truth and Reality of it. Thus, after his Multiplication of the Loaves and Fiſhes, he ordered his Diſciples to gather up the Fragments, which amounted to twelve Baſkets full. Upon his changing the Water into Wine, at Cana, he commanded the Servants to carry it to the Ruler of the Feaſt, for him to taſte it. When he had healed the Leper near Capernaum, he ſent him to preſent his Oblation, in Teſtimony of his Cure; and here, for the ſame Reaſon, viz. the Demonſtration of the Compleatneſs of his Cure, he bids the Paralytick " take up his Bed and go Home." But why did he this on the Sabbath-Day? Even to make his Divine Power and Miſſion more univerſally known, eſpecially in Jeruſalem, the Capital of the Nation, and Center of the Jewiſh Church, by firſt working this Miracle on the Sabbath-Day, when there were more People at Liberty to view and conſider it; and then ſending his Patient along the Streets, in a very uncommon Manner, and to make the People more inquiſitive, with his Bed upon his Back.

The Prohibition relating to the Obſervation of the Sabbath, runs thus: " Thus ſaith the Lord, Take heed to yourſelves, and bear no Burthen on the Sabbath-Day, nor bring it in by the Gates of Jeruſalem, neither carry

ry forth a Burthen out of your Houſes on the Sabbath-Day, neither do ye any Work, but hallow ye the Sabbath-Day, as I commanded your Fathers," Jer. xvii. 21, 22. and, according to the Jewiſh Canons, thoſe who did this, were puniſhable either by Death or Scourging. It muſt be acknowledged therefore, that our Saviour's Jnjunction to the impotent Man was contrary to the Letter of the Law; but then it may be juſtly ſaid, that it was not contrary to the Senſe and Intention of it. The Law only prohibited civil Labour, and reſtrained Men from carrying ſuch Burthens as they were wont to do in the Way of their Trade; but it did not forbid the doing of any Thing that might be a Teſtimony of God's Mercy or Goodneſs to Mankind. As therefore the Sabbath was made for the Honour of God, and this Action was a publick Monument of his Mercy and Power, the Man, properly ſpeaking, did not break the Sabbath; neither did our Lord deſerve any Cenſure from the Jews, eſpecially conſidering that as he was a Prophet, even by their own Rules, he had Power to require what was contrary to the ceremonial Reſt of the Sabbath.

From the Jews accuſing our Saviour of Blaſphemy, it ſeems to follow, that though the Jews had very high Conceptions of the Meſſiah, and were confident, that when he came he would be a mighty Prince, and ſubdue all other Nations under his Feet; yet they never once imagined that he would be God, or in the ſtrict and ſublime Senſe of the Word, the Son of God, though, in the very Prophecies, which (as they themſelves acknowledge) relate to the Meſſiah, he is called Immanuel, Iſa. vii. 14, and elſewhere " the Mighty God, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace," Iſa. ix. 6.

But to reſume our Hiſtory. What the Reſult of our Saviour's Defence before the Sanhedrim was, we cannot tell, becauſe none of the Evangeliſts have acquainted us: But the Sequel of the Hiſtory informs us, that it no Ways abated the Malice of the Phariſees; becauſe, on the very next Sabbath-Day, upon his Diſciples pulling ſome Ears of Corn, (as they paſſed through the Fields) rubbing them in their Hands, and ſo eating them, when they were hungry, they began again to clamour againſt this Violation of the Sabbath; until our Saviour, in Vindication of his Diſciples, both from the Example of David and his Attendants (who eat the Shew-bread, which it was unlawful for the Laity to eat) when they were hungry, and from the Example of their own Prieſts, who performed the Work of the Temple on the Sabbath-Day, endeavoured to convince them, that Works of Neceſſity were ſometimes permitted, even to the Breach of ritual Commands; that Acts of Mercy were the beſt and moſt acceptable Method of ſerving God upon any Day whatever; that it was inverting the Order of Things, to ſuppoſe, that Man was made for the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath for the Benefit of Man: But if even it were not ſo, that he, as the Son of God, and conſequently Lord of the Sabbath, had a Power to

to diſpenſe with the ceremonial Laws concerning it.

Not long after this, our Saviour left Jeruſalem, and returned into Galilee, where, on another Sabbath-Day, while he was preaching, there ſtood before him a Man, whoſe Right-Hand was ſhrunk and withered; and when the Scribes and Phariſees inſidiouſly watched him, whether he would cure him, or not, our Lord bade him ſtand up in the Midſt of the Aſſembly, as an object of publick Commiſeration; and turning to theſe ſuperſtitious Obſervers of the Sabbath, put this Queſtion to them, Whether they " thought it lawful on the Sabbath-Day, to do good or ill, actually to ſave Life; or negligently to deſtroy it?" And then, from their own Practice, in running to the Relief of any dumb Creature, on the Sabbath-Day, he fairly inferred, that whatever their hypocritical Pretences might be, they themſelves eſteemed it lawful to do good on that Day; and ſo looking about him with ſome Marks of Indignation for their ſtrange Perverſeneſs, he commanded the poor Man to ſtretch out his lame Hand, and that very Moment it became as ſound as the other.

The Phariſees, however, though ſilenced by his Arguments, and ſurprized at his Miracles, would not ſurceaſe their Malice, but joined in Conſultation with the Herodians (though a Sect quite oppoſite to them in Principles) how they might take away his Life; which, when our Saviour underſtood, he withdrew, with his Diſciples, toward the Sea-ſide; but which Way ſoever he went, his Name was now grown ſo famous, that vaſt Multitudes, not only out of Galilee, but from Jeruſalem, from the Provinces of Judea, and Idumea, and all the Country about Jordan, as far as the Mediterranean-Sea, to the Coaſt of Tyre and Sidon, hearing the Report of his miraculous Power to cure all Diſeaſes with a Word of his Mouth, the Touch of his Hand, or barely the handling of his Garment, came with their Sick and poſſeſſed for Help, and as faſt as they came, he cured them. Nay, to ſuch a Degree was his Fame increaſed, that the very Devils and unclean Spirits publickly confeſſed, that he was the Son of God, till, upon all Occaſions, they were reſtrained and compelled to Silence.

The following Remarks may ſerve to explain what Difficulties may occur in the preceding Relation.

What our Lord's Diſciples did, in pulling the Ears of Corn, could not be accounted any unjuſt Invaſion of another's Property, becauſe the Law had indulged them thus far; " When thou goeſt into thy Neighbour's Standing-corn, thou mayeſt pluck the Ears with thy Hand: but thou ſhalt not move a Sickle to thy Neighbour's Standing-corn, Deut. xxiii. 25. It was not then for plucking the Ears of Corn, much leſs (as ſome ſay) for breaking their Faſts before they had celebrated the publick Offices (which was contrary to the Cuſtom of the Jews, Acts ii. 15.) that the Phariſees took Exceptions to the Diſciples; but for plucking them on the Sabbath-Day, whereof they thought this Action (which at other Times was lawful enough) was a Violation, and accordingly

accordingly our Saviour's whole Vindication of them turns upon this Suppoſition.

There is ſomething very cogent in our Saviour's Argument, taken from David's Practice, becauſe, according to the Conceſſion of the Jews themſelves, his Example contains two Things, tending to excuſe the Violation of the Sabbath. 1. That they ſuppoſe that David and his Men fled on the Sabbath-Day, and yet were not guilty of breaking the Reſt of the Sabbath; for "our Maſters think it lawful, ſay they, in him, whom the Gentiles, or Thieves purſue, to profane the Sabbath, by the Perſervation of his Life, even as David when Saul purſued to kill him, fled and eſcaped." 2. That their Canons allowed the Laity to eat of the Shew-bread for the Preſervation of Life; for it is a ſmall Thing, ſay they, "to hold that it is lawful for us to eat of the Bread removed from the Table; it would be lawful of us, in the Extremity of hunger, even to eat of the Bread, now ſanctified upon the Table; if there were no other." And, indeed, this Opinion, that it was lawful to violate the Sabbath for the Preſervation of Life, ſeems plainly to have obtained, before the Tranſlation of the Septuagint, who render the Words in Exod. xii. 16. to this Purpoſe, "Ye ſhall do no ſervile Work on it, but that which ſhall be done for the Safety of Life.

The Shew-bread (which in Hebrew is literally the Bread of Faces) was ſo called, not becauſe it was ſet upon the golden Table, which was in the Sanctuary, but becauſe it was placed before the Lord, i. e. not far from hte Ark of the Covenant, which was the Symbol of his more immediate Preſence. Theſe Loaves, according to the Number of the Tribes, were twelve: They were made four ſquare, covered over with Leaves of Gold, and were of a conſiderable Bigneſs, having about three Quarts of Flour in each. They were ſerved up hot every Sabbath-Day, and at the ſame Time the ſtale ones, which had been expoſed the whole preceding Week, were taken away, and allowed to be eaten by none but the Prieſts, and that only in the Holy Place, which was the Tabernacle at firſt, and afterwards the Temple, Lev. xxiv. 5. &c. and the Reaſon of this Inſtitution ſeems to have been, to repreſent, in a more lively Manner to the People, God's Government and Preſence among them; that as the Tabernacle firſt, and then the Temple, was his Palace and Place of Reſidence, ſo theſe weekly Services of Bread, Wine and Salt (ſay the Jews) were to denote his Habitation among them, as if he had been an earthly Prince, for whom ſuch Proviſions were made.

There are ſome who pretend to infer from the Paſſage of St. Mark, Chap. ii. 27. that the Words in St. Matthew, "The Son of Man is Lord alſo of the Sabbath," Chap. xii. 8. are of the ſame Import with, "The Sabbath was made for Man;" ſo that the Son of Man is here put for all Men in general, and conſequently the Senſe of the Words muſt be, that every one is Lord of the Sabbath, to obſerve or diſpenſe with it, according to the Call

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or Exigency of his Affairs. But beſides that, the Phraſe, Son of Man, which is uſed no leſs than eighty-eight Times in the New Teſtament, is in all other Places ſet to denote our bleſſed Lord; and in Dan. vii. 13. from whence it is originally taken, it is thought, by all antient Jews, as well as Chriſtians, to ſignify the Meſſiah only; it is plain that theſe two Paſſages are diſtinct Propoſitions in St. Mark, Chap. ii. 27, 28. and that they can relate to no other than our Saviour Chriſt, becauſe he tells the Phariſees, and therein means himſelf, that in that Place, "there was one greater than the Temple," i. e. whoſe prophetick Office was of more Conſequence to the World, than the ſacerdotal Adminiſtration in the Temple, and ought therefore, leaſt of all, to be interrupted by a ſuperſtitious Obſervation of the Sabbath. "The Sabbath was made for Man," muſt therefore ſignify, that it was firſt appointed for the Good and Benefit of Man; and being ſo, it cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed, to oblige him to any Thing ſo contrary to Humanity, as ſtarving or debilitating his Nature; and therefore, as the Son of Man came not to deſtroy Men's Lives, but to ſave them, he muſt have Power, in ſuch Caſes as concern the Good and Welfare of Mankind, to diſpenſe with the ſtrict Reſt of the Sabbath which the Law required.

The Text, Luke vi. 9. is not contrary to what St. Matthew, Chap. xii. 10. tells us, viz. that they aſked him, becauſe both are true. They aſked him, "Whether it was lawful to heal?" and he, in Reply, ſays, "I alſo will aſk you one Thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do Good, or to do Evil?" Luke vi. 9. We are not, however, to ſuppoſe, that by doing Evil, our Saviour propounded to the Phariſees, Whether, on the Sabbath-day it was lawful to do that, which, on any other Day, is utterly unlawful; for then, without doubt, they would have had a ready Anſwer for him; but only whether, according to the Inſtitution of the Sabbath, it was lawful to do Good, or not to do it, to ſave Life, or not to ſave it, when a Man had it equally in his Power. And the Reaſon why our Saviour inſtances in ſaving a Life is, becauſe it was a Maxim then among the Jews, that on the Sabbath-Day, all ſervile Work was prohibited, except where the Life of any Man or Beaſt was concerned; but the modern Jews are of a contrary Opinion, and in Hatred to Chriſtians (as Grotius thinks) have loaded the Obſervation of the Sabbath with ſuch trifling and ſuperſtitious Practices, as their Forefathers and ancient Doctors never knew of.

Whether the Herodians were a particular Sect of Hereticks, or only a Party or Faction among the Jews, Authors have not determined. Thoſe who account them of the former Kind, ſuppoſe them to be Perſons, who, to ingratiate themſelves with Herod, either the Father or Son (for in that they are not agreed) maintained him to be the expected Meſſiah, and who, in their other religious Principles, very much reſembled the Phariſees;

ſees; and therefore what St. Matthew calls the Leaven of the Phariſees, chap. xvi. 6. St. Mark ſtiles the Leaven of Herod, chap. viii. 15. But thoſe who ſuppoſe them to be only a Party, make them great Eſpouſers of Herod's ſecular Intereſt, and Supporters of his new acquired Sovereignty; a Set of Politicians, who favoured the Dominion of Herod and the Romans (in Oppoſition to the Phariſees, who were zealous for the Liberty of their Nation) and were therefore very active in preſſing the People to pay their Tribute to Cæſar, as the only Means to make Herod ſit eaſy on his Throne. For which Reaſon, perhaps, they might be called Herodians, or Royaliſts, as the other Jews, who were of the contrary Opinion, might properly be ſtiled Republicans.

It was a Direction which our Saviour gave to his Diſciples, " when they perſecute you in this City, flee into another, Matt. x. 23. and a Rule which himſelf put in practice: For, when by his Doctrine and Miracles, he could do no Good upon Men, by Reaſon of " the Hardneſs of their Hearts," Mark iii. 5. " he uſually departed and retired, that he might give Place to their Wrath, and ſecure himſelf from their Malice," Matt. xii. 15. and John viii. 59. From hence we may learn, that in ſuch Caſes, it is very lawful to conſult our Safety, for in concealing the Truth, we do not betray it, but rather comply with our Lord's Precept, " not to caſt Pearls before Swine," Matt. vii. 6.

Though the Word Idumea be no more than a Greek Name derived from the Hebrew Edom, yet it is not to be underſtood of the original Habitation of the Edomites, Mount Seir, but rather of that Southern Part of the Province of Judea, which, during the Captivity of the Jews at Babylon, being left deſtitute, or not ſufficiently inhabited by its Natives, ſeems to have been poſſeſſed by the neighbouring Idumeans. Theſe Idumeans, when afterwards conquered by the Maccabees, choſe rather to embrace the Jewiſh Religion, than to quit the Habitations they had taken Poſſeſſion of; and though, hereupon, they were incorporated into the Body of the Jewiſh Nation, yet that Tract of Judea, which they inhabited, did not ſo ſoon loſe the Name of Idumea, derived from them, but retained it, not only in our Saviour's Days, but for a conſiderable Time afterwards.

But to go on with our Narrative. Finding ſome Inconveniences in the Preſſure of the People, he ordered his Diſciples for the Time to come, to have a ſmall Veſſel always in Readineſs, for him to ſtep into upon Occaſion; and ſo retired to a ſolitary Mountain, where he continued all Night in Prayer, intending next Morning to make an Election of ſome particular Perſons, both to be witneſſes of his Actions and Diſcourſes, and after his Departure out of the World, his Vicegerents upon Earth, Founders of his Church, and Propagators of his Goſpel.

The Number of theſe, according to the Patriarchs, was Twelve; Simon (who is likewiſe named Peter) and Andrew, James (commonly called the Great) and John; Philip and Bartholomew;

lomew; Matthew and Thomas; James (commonly called the Leſs) and Simon the Canaanite; Jude the Brother of James, and Judas Iſcariot, who ſo juſtly deſerved the Title of Traitor. To theſe he gave the Name of Apoſtles; and as he perceived the Multitude gathering round him, theſe he called nearer than the reſt to him, and began that moſt excellent Diſcourſe which comprizes all the great Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, and is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount.

Herein he pronounces divers Bleſſings both ſpiritual and temporal, to ſuch as the generality of the World eſteemed Miſerable; to the Poor in Spirit, or humble-minded; to the Kind and Merciful; to the pious Mourners; to the Peace-makers; to the Meek and Patient; to the pure in Heart; to ſuch as hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs; and to ſuch as are perſecuted upon the Account therof. Herein he inſtructs the Apoſtles, more eſpecially in their Duty; and in ſeveral Compariſons ſetting before them the high Station, wherein he had ſo lately placed them, and how much it would redound to their Honour, if they behaved well, and to their Diſhonour, if otherwiſe; he recommends above all other Things, Purity of Life and Converſation. Herein he expounds the true Meaning, and ſhews the juſt Extent of ſeveral moral Precepts, viz. The Laws againſt Murder, againſt Adultery, againſt Perjury; that concerning Retalliation, and that of loving our Neighbour; and reſcues them from the wretched Gloſſes and Interpretations which the Jews had put upon them. Herein he explains and teaches the proper Method of performing, with Acceptance, the ſeveral Duties of Charity to the Poor, Prayer and Faſting. Herein he diſſuades us from all covetous Inclinations, and anxious Thoughts concerning the Things of this World, from a Conſciouſneſs of our being under the Providential Care of God: And having laid down ſeveral other Precepts and Inſtructions, he concludes the whole with this Admonition, "That whoever heard, believed and practiſed the Things contained in his Diſcourſes, would, in the Event, be like a wiſe Builder, who laid the Foundation of his Houſe upon a Rock, not to be affected by Wind or Weather; but that he, who heard and practiſed them not, would be like a Man, who built his Houſe upon the Sand, ſoon to be blown down by the Winds, and waſhed away by the Floods."

This Sermon was delivered with ſuch a Grace and Majeſty, as gained the Applauſe of the whole Audience, and made them very readily declare their Senſe of the Difference between ſuch divine Diſcourſes, and the jejune Harangues of the ordinary Teachers, the Scribes; and to confirm his Doctrine by the Teſtimony of Miracles, our Bleſſed Saviour, upon his Deſcent from the Mount, healed a Leper and then remitted him to the Prieſt, to make his Oblation in Acknowledgment of his Cure.

Let us explain ſome Things we have been relating.

Some have thought that the Greek Words "He went out into a Mountain to pray," ſhould be rendered "in a Houſe of Prayer of God," or in a Synagogue dedicated to the Service of God; but then they will be obliged to find out any Houſe of Prayer, which at that Time ſtood on a Mountain, or any, except the Temple, which was called by that Name: Nor can we conceive why our Lord ſhould go out into a Mountain to pray, if it were not for the Privacy and Retirement of it, which he could not have had in any common Place of divine Worſhip. Our Saviour, however, being about to ſend out his twelve Apoſtles, thought that ſo great a Work could not be done, without offering up his ſolemn Addreſſes to God, for their Succeſs; and accordingly having found a Place of Retirement, he thither betook himſelf, and, as the Evangeliſts inform us, continued all Night in Prayer, leaving the Biſhops and Governors of his Church an Example what they are to do in the great and momentous Affair of appointing Perſons to the Miniſtry of the Goſpel.

Theſe two Brothers, James and John, our Saviour calls Boanerges, a Word compoſed of two Hebrew or Syriac Words, but which have ſuffered ſome Alteration in their paſſing into the Greek Language. For whether it be, that the Greek Tranſcriber has miſtaken them, or that this might be the corrupt Way of pronouncing them in Galilee, certain it is, that the Original are Benoi Rehem, denoting Sons of Thunder, or of a Tempeſt, a Name given them in Alluſion to the natural Heat and Zeal of their Temper, and that Vehemence and Efficacy wherewith our Saviour foreſaw that they would preach the Goſpel. Of the former of theſe they gave an early Inſtance, in their Deſire to "call down Fire from Heaven" to conſume the Samaritans, Luke ix. 54. And in the Acts of the Apoſtles, we find that Peter and John are the chief Actors and Speakers in the Defence and Propagation of the Goſpel; and that the Zeal of James and Peter ſeems to be the Reaſon, why the one was ſlain by Herod, and the other impriſoned, in order to the like Execution.

The Name given here to the Apoſtle Bartholomew, is not his proper but patronymical Name, and imports only the Son of Tholomew, or Tolmai: So that we are ſtill at a Loſs for his perſonal Name, unleſs we will admit of the Conjecture, that he was indeed no more than Nathaniel. To this Purpoſe, it is remarkable, 1ſt, That as no other Evangeliſt makes mention of Nathaniel, but St. John, ſo he never once makes mention of Bartholomew. 2dly, That in the Catalogue of the Apoſtles, Phillip and Bartholomew are always coupled together, and were, probably, ſent out together to preach the Goſpel: And fit Companions they were, ſuppoſing that Nathaniel to be the Man, with whom, it is plain, that Phillip had an Intimacy, and was the firſt Inſtrument of bringing him to Jeſus. 3dly, That this Nathaniel is by St. John,

John, chap. xxi. 2. named in Company with ſeveral of the Apoſtles, upon our Saviour's ſhewing himſelf at the Sea of Tiberias, after his Reſurrection, which the Evangeliſt tells us, was the third Time of his doing ſo, ver. 14. and this is ſome Preſumption that he was of them. 4thly, That at the two former Times, it is expreſly ſaid that he appeared to the Eleven, John xx. 19, 26. And here, at the third Time of his Appearance, thoſe that are named with Nathaniel, are all of that Number. From theſe Conſiderations it is more than probable, that Nathaniel, was one of the Apoſtles; which can only be accounted for, by ſuppoſing that St. John calls the ſame Perſon by his proper Name Nathaniel, whom the other Evangeliſt calls by his patronymical, Bartholomew.

Thomas, in Hebrew, or Syriac either, ſignifies a Twin, and ſo is the ſame with Didymus, that other Name whereby this Apoſtle is ſometimes called.

Some are of Opinion, that Simon is here called the Canaanite from Cana, a little Town in Galilee, the Place of his Birth and Habitation; but others rather think, that ſince the Apoſtle is, by St. Luke, chap. vi. 15. called Zelotes, the Canaanites and Zelotes are perfectly the ſame, juſt as Cephas and Peter, Tabitha and Dorcas are. That there was a Faction among the Jews, a little before the Deſtruction of their City and Nation, who aſſumed to themſelves the Title of Zealots (out of an hypocritical Oſtentation of Holineſs, though, at the ſame Time, in their Hearts and Practices they were the lewdeſt of Men) Joſephus gives us a large and lamentable Account; but whether that Faction was in the Beginning of our Saviour's Time, or whether to be of the Number of Zealots, as the Hiſtorian has deſcribed, may not be an Injury and Reproach to this Apoſtle's Memory, is much to be doubted.

The Surname of Judas, namely, Iſcariot, may be taken either from the Place of his Birth, which was Carioth, in the Tribe of Iſſachar, whereof we have Mention in Joſh. xv. 25. and Amos xi. 2. or from the Syriac Word Secariat, denoting the Purſe or Wallet, which it was the Office of this Judas to carry; or from the Word Aſhara or Iſcara, which ſignifies to ſtrangle; and therefore a Name which the Evangeliſts might give him after his Death: But all theſe Etymologies are no more than mere Conjectures.

The Wiſdom of Chriſt ſaw fit to admit Judas into the Number of his Diſciples, that by him the Counſel of God, in giving up his Son to Death, and the Predictions of the Prophets might be fulfilled, Acts i. 16. This very Perſon, however, is by our Lord ſent to preach the Goſpel, to cure Diſeaſes, and to caſt out Devils, who had himſelf a Devil, John vi. 70. thereby to teach us that the Miſſion of a Perſon may be valid, though he be not ſanctified, that in Things belonging to the miniſterial Office, we ſhould hearken, even to ſuch Perſons and obey them.

The Greek Word for Apoſtle, ſignifies an Envoy, and was a Name given by the Jews to any Meſſenger in general,

ral, but more eſpecially to ſuch Perſons as were ſent by the High-prieſt and Heads of the People, to collect the Tithes and other Dues belonging to the Temple or Synagogue, or to carry their Orders and Mandates to the Cities and Provinces, when any Affairs, relating to Religion, were tranſacted; and to this Cuſtom St. Paul ſeems to allude, where he ſtiles himſelf "an Apoſtle, not of Man, neither by Man, but of Jeſus Chriſt," Gal. v. 1. Our Saviour, indeed, as he was no Lover of Innovations, took the Word from among the Jews; but then he raiſed it to a much higher and more honourable Signification; for himſelf declares, that he ſent out his Apoſtles, even as his Father ſent out him, John xx. 21. i. e. with a full Commiſſion to act in his ſtead, even as he did in God's: And accordingly we may obſerve, that as the Father gave Judgment to the Son, John v. 22. ſo in Effect, the Son gives Judgment to the Apoſtles, Matt. xix 28. Luke xxii. 30. and 2 Cor. x. 6. that, as the Father gives the Son Power to forgive Sins upon Earth, Matt. x. 6. ſo the Son gives Power to the Apoſtles to remit Sins on Earth likewiſe, John xx. 23. that as the Father gave the Son the Honour to ſit down with him on his Throne, ſo the Son gave the Apoſtles the Privilege to ſit with him on Thrones, Matt. ix. 28. and Luke xxi. 30. and that as the Father gave the Son to be the Foundation or Corner-ſtone of the Church, Matt. xx. 42. ſo the Son gave the Apoſtles to be Foundations upon a Foundation, for ſo the Church is ſaid to be built upon the "Foundation of the Apoſtles, Chriſt being the chief Corner-ſtone," Eph. ii. 20.

The Mountain, where our Lord delivered his Diſcourſe is generally ſuppoſed to be Tabor; for, by comparing St. Mark, Chap xxxvii. 12. with the other Evangeliſts, Matt. xii. 14, 15. and Luke vi. 12, &c. we may perceive, that it was not far diſtant from ſome Part of the Sea of Tiberias, whither our Lord had retired very lately from the Phariſees, and about five or ſix Leagues from Capernaum, whither he returned after his Deſcent from this Mount. But then the Queſtion is, whether this Sermon be the ſame with what we find recorded by St. Luke, Chap. vi. 12. Now, in order to reſolve this, we may obſerve, firſt, that the Sermon in St. Matthew was delivered before the healing of the Leper, Chap. viii. 2. whereas St. Luke, who promiſes to diſcourſe in order of what Chriſt did, gives us firſt the Story of the Leper, chap. v. 12. and then an Account of Chriſt's Sermon, chap. vi. 27. 2dly, That the Sermon in St. Matthew, our Lord preached on the Mount, and called his Diſciples up to him, whereas St. Luke informs us, that our Lord came down with his Diſciples from a Mount, and ſtood in the Plain, and from thence preached what he recorded, ver. 17. And 3dly, That St. Luke omits the much greater Part of the Sermon, as it is recorded by St. Matthew, mentions only four Beatitudes, whereas St. Matthew ſpeaks of Eight, and has added four Woes, ver. 24, &c. whereof we find no Indications in St. Matthew. Since the Ser-

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mons then are ſo very different in their Matter, as well as in the Circumſtances of Time and Place, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that they are not the ſame; though conſidering, that after both the Sermons, we find our Lord returning to Capernaum, and healing the Centurion's Servants, Matt. viii. 5. and Luke vii. 1. we may probably conjecture, that he ſpake the Sermon in St. Matthew, whilſt he was ſitting on the Mount, to his Diſciples; but that, in St. Luke, he afterwards ſpake, when he came down into the Plain, chap. vii. 17. in the Audience of all the People, chap. vii. 1.

The Words in the Text are, "He taught them as one that had Authority, and not as the Scribes," Matt. vii. 29. But they are certainly miſtaken, who interpret the Words in this Senſe,—— "He taught them as the Author of the Doctrine which he preached, as one, who had Authority in his own Name to propound the Terms of Life and Death," becauſe it is not only contrary to the Nature of his prophetic Office, but to his own frequent Declarations, that the "Doctrine, which he taught, was not his own, but his who ſent him; and that he ſpake not of himſelf, or in his own Name, but as he had heard from his Father, and as he had commanded him to ſpeak," John vii. 16, 17, 18. viii. 28. xii. 49. xiv. 10. and therefore the true Interpretation is, what Lightfoot, and others give us, viz. "That he ſpake as a Prophet, having Authority from God to deliver his Meſſage to them, and not as the Scribes, who pretended only to deliver the Traditions of their Forefathers, and to teach them no more, than what they had learned from Hillel, Shemai, Abtalion, &c.

Let us now reſume the Hiſtory. At his Return to Capernaum he cured, at a Diſtance, the favourite Servant of the Roman Centurion, who had made an ample Declaration of his Divine Power, and thereupon received from him as ample a Commendation of his Faith; and, at his Arrival at the Gates of Nain, he reſtored to Life a Widow's only Son, as the People were carrying him out to his Funeral, to the great Joy and Comfort of his Parent, and the no leſs Wonder and Aſtoniſhment of the Spectators, who, upon this Occaſion, glorified God, and publickly declared, that a mighty Prophet was ſprung up among them, and that God had viſited his People.

Upon the Fame of this, and ſeveral other Miracles, which our Saviour did daily, John the Baptiſt, who was ſtill in Priſon, ſent two of his Diſciples to enquire of him, whether he himſelf was the promiſed Meſſiah, or ſome other Perſon was to appear in that Character? As our Lord was at that Time working Miracles, curing the Deaf, the Lame, the Blind, &c. and inſtructing the People that were gathered about him, inſtead of giving a direct Anſwer to their Queſtion, he bade them go, and report what they ſaw to their Maſter; and when he had thus diſmiſſed them, he began to diſcourſe to the People concerning John, giving a large Encomium of the Auſterity and Holineſs of his Perſon, the

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Greatneſs of his Function, and Divinity of his Commiſſion; and hence taking Occaſion to blame the Perverſeneſs of the Age, in rejecting both his and the Baptiſt's Teſtimony (though the Baptiſt was a Man of a mortified Deportment, and he a Perſon of a free and affable Behaviour, ſo that nothing would pleaſe them) he proceeded to upbraid the ſeveral Cities, where moſt of his Miracles had been wrought, viz. Chorazim, Bethſaida, and more eſpecially, Capernaum, with their Obſtinacy and Impenitence; and having declared, that the Myſteries of the Goſpel-Revelation were better adapted to the Humble and Modeſt, than to the Proud and Worldly-wiſe, he concludes his Diſcourſe with an Exhortation to ſuch as were thus qualified to be his Diſciples, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy leaden, and I will give you Reſt, &c.

No ſooner had he finiſhed this Diſcourſe, but a rich Phariſee, whoſe Name was Simon, invited him to Dinner; but, while he was at Table, there happened an Incident ſomewhat remarkable: For a certain Woman, who, not long before, had been noted for a lewd Liver, came into the Houſe, and throwing herſelf at the Feet of Jeſus, waſhed them with the Tears which flowed from her Eyes, and then, having wiped them with her Hair, ſhe kiſſed them, and anointed them with very precious Ointment.

Simon, who ſtill retained ſomething of the cenſorious Spirit of his Sect, ſeeing this Woman thus buſy in expreſſing her Love and Veneration for Jeſus, began to think within himſelf, that he could not poſſibly be a Prophet, otherwiſe he would have known the Woman to be infamous, and conſequently, not ſuffered her to touch him: But our Saviour, who well underſtood Simon's Thoughts, propoſed to him a Parable of a certain Creditor, who had two Debtors, one of which owed him ten times as much as the other, but becauſe both of them were inſolvent, he forgave them both; and then, gaining from him a Confeſſion, that the Debtor, to whom the larger Sum was forgiven, would in Gratitude be bound to love the Creditor moſt, he turned to the Woman, and (by Way of Application) not only apologized both for her Behaviour and his own, but reproached his Hoſt likewiſe, for having omitted ſome Inſtances of Reſpect and Civility, which this contemptible Woman (as he eſteemed her) had abundantly ſupplied. And therefore, in Return for ſuch uncommon Kindneſs, he gave her a full Pardon and Abſolution of all her Sins, which ſome in the Company ſeemed to reſent, as an Invaſion of the Divine Prerogative, but which gave him no Manner of Uneaſineſs.

Upon his leaving Nain, he made a Progreſs, for ſome Months, round other Parts of Galilee, accompanied with his Apoſtles, and ſeveral devout Women, whom he had cured of ſundry Diſeaſes, and who, in Gratitude, attended his Perſon, and out of their own Subſtance adminiſtered to his Neceſſities; till returning, at length, to his own City, Capernaum, ſuch Multitudes of People, upon the Rumour

mour of his being come again, reſorted to him, that neither he, nor his Diſciples could find Time to eat: But "his Meat was to do the Will of God," by healing the Sick, and relieving the Oppreſſed; and therefore, as ſoon as a poor Demoniack, both blind and dumb, was brought before him, he immediately reſtored him both to his Speech and Eye-ſight, inſomuch that all who ſaw it were greatly aſtoniſhed; and, with a general Voice, declared, that the Perſon who did ſuch wonderful Works, could be no other than the promiſed Meſſiah.

The Phariſees however, and Doctors of the Law, who came from Jeruſalem, gave another Turn to this Miracle: They aſcribed it to the Power of the Devil, even to Beelzebub, the Chief of the Devils; and therefore our Bleſſed Saviour, by the Compariſon of a Kingdom or Houſe divided againſt itſelf (which is the readieſt Way to bring it to deſolation) ſhews the Abſurdity of their Allegations; ſince, by that Means, the Devil would take the moſt effectual Courſe to deſtroy his own Empire. Nay, he argues from their own Pretenſions of having certain allowed Exorciſts among you, that evil Spirits may be caſt out by the Finger of God; that, when they were apparently ſo, it was very manifeſt that the Kingdom of God, or the Meſſiah, was come among them; that obſtinately to reſiſt the Evidence of ſuch Miracles, or to aſcribe them to a diabolical Power, was that "Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt," which is of a nature unpardonable; and that, ſince they had been ſo impious, as to blaſpheme the Holy Spirit, by which he wrought them, nothing leſs could be expected, than that the Devils, ejected by him, finding no where among the Heathens ſuch deſirable Habitations of Reſt and Contentment, as among them, would endeavour to return, with ſeveral other worſe than themſelves, and, by their prodigious Wickedneſs and Obſtinate Infidelity, finding them more prepared than ever to receive them, would there take up their ſettled Abode, and having made them more incredulous and obdurate, more impure and wicked, more hypocritical and blaſphemous, than they were before, would bring upon them too a more lamentable Deſtruction.

All this however hindered not the Scribes and Phariſees from demanding of our Saviour ſome new Sign or Miracle, in Evidence of his Miſſion; but as he had given them a ſufficient Number of theſe already, he only referred them to one, that would not come to paſs till after his Death, namely, that of Jonas, whoſe deliverance from the Whale's belly, after three days Confinement, was an eminent Type of his Reſurrection, after as long a Continuance of his Body in the Bowels of the Earth; and thence took Occaſion to remind them, that the Inhabitants of Nineveh, a Pagan City, and alſo the Queen of Sheba, ſhould riſe up in Judgment againſt that Generation, and condemn it, becauſe the former repented at the Preaching of Jonas, and the latter took a vaſt Journey to partake of the Benefits of Solomon's Wiſdom, whereas they refuſed to hearken

to one, who was inconteſtibly greater than either Jonas or Solomon.

While he was continuing his Diſcourſe in this manner, Word was brought, that his Mother and ſome other Kinsfolk were at the Door, deſiring to ſpeak with him (for, fearing either that he might be too much tranſported by his Miniſtry, or grow faint for want of eating, or be endangered by the Throng, they came to get him away) but, being diſſatisfied with their unſeaſonable Interruption, he took Occaſion to inform the Audience, that all worldly Relations were of no leſs Conſideration, than the Ties of Duty and Religion; that the Names of Mother and Brother, which are ſanctified by the Laws of God and Nature, were made much more ſacred, when a ſpiritual Kindred does ſupervene; and ſo turning to his Diſciples, he declared, that they were his trueſt Relations, "who heard the Word of God, and practiſed it."

The ſame Day he went out of the Houſe where he commonly abode, and for the greater Conveniency of teaching the People, repaired to the Seaſhore, where, being followed by the ſame Multitudes, to avoid the Throng he went on board a Veſſel, and from thence taught them in Parables, an uſual way of Inſtruction among the Jews, but what he had not practiſed before, thereby to engage the Attention and accommodate himſelf to the Capacity of thoſe that heard him. By the Parable of the Sower, he repreſented the different Succeſſes of the Goſpel, according to the different Diſpoſitions of its Hearers: by the Tares growing among the good Seed, the Mixture of the Wicked and Godly under the ſame Profeſſion of Chriſtianity; by the Grain of Muſtard-ſeed, and the little Piece of Leaven, the wonderful Increaſe and Propagation of the Goſpel from ſmall Beginnings; by the Treaſure in the Field, and the Pearl of great Price, the ineſtimable benefits, that would accrue to the true Profeſſors of religion,; but that the Profeſſion of it would include a mixt Multitude, and therefore like a Net, caſt into the Sea, which incloſes Fiſhes of all kinds, ſome good, and ſome bad, the Good to be preſerved, but the Bad caſt away. This is the Explication which our Lord gave his Diſciples of theſe ſeveral Parables; and when, by their Anſwer, he perceived that they underſtood them all, he concluded his Diſcourſe with one Similitude more, viz. That "every Goſpel-Teacher ought to reſemble a well furniſhed Houſe-keeper, who brings all Things out of his Repoſitory, both old and new, according to the Occaſions of his Gueſts."

It will now be proper to make Remarks on what we have juſt now related.

A Centurion was an Officer commanding an hundred Men, much of the ſame Rank and Station of one of our Captains, and belonged to the Iron Legion (as it was called) which uſually quartered in Judea.

Naim, or Nain, ſo called for the Pleaſantneſs of its ſituation, was a Town of Galilee, about two Leagues from Nazareth, and not ſo much from

Mount

Mount Tabor, between which and the City ran the River Kiſon: And from our Saviour's meeting the Funeral coming out at the Gates, we may learn, that it was a Cuſtom among the Jews to bury their Dead out of the City, becauſe they looked upon their Graves, as Places full of Pollution; whereas we Chriſtians, in hopes of a joyful Reſurrection, and upon Preſumption that many of thoſe whoſe Bodies are repoſited in the Earth, are in a State of Felicity in Heaven, look upon theſe Places with great Reſpect and Veneration, and accordingly have our Tombs erected always very near, and ſometimes within the Body of our Churches.

The People of Naim do, Luke. vii. 16. acknowledge Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, or that great Prophet, whom Moſes had promiſed to the Jews: "The Lord thy God will raiſe up unto thee a Prophet, from the midſt of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me, unto him ſhall ye hearken," Deut. xviii. 15. for they deſcribe this Prophet in the very ſame Terms, that Zacharias, the Father of John the Baptiſt, makes uſe of to denote the Meſſiah, "The Lord hath viſited his People," Luke i. 68.

The Words in the Text, Art thou he that ſhould come, or rather, he that is coming? For the prophecies of the Meſſiah in the Old Teſtament were ſo plain, and yet his Perſon or Name ſo unknown to the Jews, that they were wont to expreſs it by ſome Circumlocution, and more eſpecially by this of he that cometh, for ſo he is termed, Matt. iii. 11. xxi. 9. Luke vii. 20. xix. 38. John xii. 13. and Heb. x. 37, &c. and this Name they gathered from Habukkuk, where he is called, he that ſhall come, Chap. ii. 3. and from Daniel, where he is ſtiled, "he that cometh with the Clouds of Heaven," Chap. vii. 13.

If it be aſked, How the ſeeing of theſe Things done by our Saviour could be a ſufficient Argument to John's Diſciples, that he was, in Truth, the Meſſiah? The Reply is, That the Performance of theſe Things was exactly anſwerable to the Character which the Prophet had given the Meſſiah, "That at the Coming of God to ſave them, the Eyes of the Blind ſhould be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf unſtopped; that the lame ſhould ſing," Iſaiah xxxv. 4, &c. And therefore, inſtead of giving them a direct Anſwer, which might be liable to the old Objection of his bearing Record of himſelf, John viii. 13. our Saviour refers them to the Miracles they ſaw him do; Miracles of the ſame Kind that were predicted of the Meſſiah, and then leaves it to their own Maſter to draw the Concluſions from thence; which was a Method of Conviction more ſhort and ſtrong, and withal more agreeable to our Saviour's Modeſty and great Humility, than any long Detail of Arguments would have proved.

Maimonides obſerves, that though the Jews generally reckon eleven Degrees of Prophecy, yet two of theſe were ſomething more ſublime and excellent than ordinary Prophecy. The one of theſe was what they called the

Gradus Moſaicus, when the Prophet had a familiar Converſe with God upon all Occaſions; and the other, when he had Revelations, not from a Dream or Extaſy, but an immediate Dictate of the Holy Ghoſt. Of this ſort was John the Baptiſt, who was plainly told by the Father, Matt. iii. 17. John xiii. 3. and as plainly proclaimed it to others, that Jeſus "was the Lamb of God." Other Prophets ſpeak of the Coming of Chriſt, but then they did it in a dark and obſcure Manner: They ſaw him only at a Diſtance, in a Dream, or in a Viſion of the Night, and couched their Predictions under a Veil of enigmatical Phraſes; but the Baptiſt ſpake of him openly and diſtinctly. He knew him; he was converſant with him; he pointed him out to the People; he had, in ſhort, the Honour of baptizing him, and hearing the Voice from Heaven teſtifying of him, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed." And upon theſe Accounts we find him called a great and illuſtrious Perſon, Luke i. 15. one "filled with the Holy Ghoſt;" and, by way of Excellence, "the Prophet of the Moſt High, ver. 16.

The Words of our Saviour, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented," Matt. xi. 17. ſeem to be a Proverb, founded upon a Cuſtom among the Jewiſh Children, to imitate what they ſaw done by others upon greater Occaſions, and particularly the Cuſtom in Feſtivities or Funerals; when, in the former, as ſoon as the Muſician ſtruck up a Tune, the Company began to dance to his Pipe; and, in the latter, as ſoon as ſome old Women had begun the mournful Song, the reſt followed, lamenting, and beating their Breaſts. Theſe the Children were uſed to act, and perſonate in the Streets at Play; and when one had begun the Muſician's Part, and another the old Woman's Part, and the reſt did not follow them in theirs, this gave Occaſion to the proverbial Saying, which our Saviour applies to the preſent Purpoſe in this Senſe; "I, and "John, have both of us invited you "to enter into the Kingdom of Hea-"ven, or to turn to God by Repen-"tance: John by the Auſterity of his "Life, and I, by my Affability and "Courteſy, have endeavoured to re-"commend ourſelves; but all to no "Purpoſe. You will neither mourn "with him, nor laugh with me; but, "for that very Reaſon, cenſure and re-"vile our different Behaviour, account-"ing him, for his reſerved Temper, "no better than a melancholy kind "of Madman: and me, for my open "and free Converſation, a mere Glut-"ton and Wine-bibber."

"To come unto Chriſt," in the Phraſe of the New Teſtament, is to believe in him, and to become one of his Diſciples; and this Invitation our Saviour gives to all Mankind in general, and to the Jews in particular. To all Mankind, foraſmuch as all, without the Knowledge of Chriſt, are heavily loden with the Burden of their Sins, and the Calamities incident to Life; are ſurrounded with a Cloud of Ignorance, and held in Bondage through the Fear of Death: And to the Jews in particular,

lar, foraſmuch as they, under their Diſpenſation, were oppreſſed with a Load of Ceremonies, " a Yoke, which neither they, nor their Fathers were able to bear," Acts xv. 10. beſides the additional Weight, which the Phariſees laid upon them, by their Traditions, " heavy Burdens, and grievous to be " born, Matt. xviii. 4.

It is not a little ſtrange that any Interpreters ſhould ever imagine, that the Story of a rich Phariſee inviting our Saviour to Dinner, as related by St. Luke, ſhould be the ſame with that related in Matt. xxvi. Mark xv. and John xii. ſince the Hiſtories agree ſcarce in any Thing, unleſs it be in bringing the Alabaſter Box of Ointment, and anointing our Saviour's Feet, which, in theſe Countries, eſpecially at great Entertainments, was no uncommon Thing. But now the Anointing, in the other Evangeliſts, was done at Bethany, within two miles of Jeruſalem; this, in St. Luke, in Galilee; that, in the Houſe of one Simon, a Phariſee; that, but a little before our Saviour's Paſſion; this, a conſiderable Time before it. At that Judas was offended for the Waſte of the Ointment; at this, Simon for the Woman's touching our Saviour: Upon that Occaſion our Lord vindicates the Woman from one head of Argument, and upon this from another. So that all Circumſtances make it plain, that theſe were different Actions, done by different Perſons, and at different Times.

Who this Woman was, the Goſpel no where tells us. We read indeed of three Perſons, who by ſeveral Evangeliſts, are ſaid to have anointed our Lord's Head and Feet, viz. Mary Magdalene, Mary the Siſter of Lazarus, and this other Woman, whom St Luke calls a Sinner: And ſome Commentators make theſe three to be one and the ſame Perſon. It is to be obſerved however, that the Siſter of Lazarus is, all along, repreſented as a Perſon of great Sobriety and Virtue, who always lived at Bethany, was none of our Lord's Attendants, nor ever came into Galilee; and, conſequently was a Woman diſtinct from Mary Magdalene, who was of his Retinue, Luke viii. 2. and from this other Woman, who anointed his Feet in Simon's Houſe: But, whether this Mary Magdalene, and this Woman, here called a Sinner, might not be the ſame Perſon, is not ſo eaſy to determine. The Characteriſtick of Magdalene is, that ſhe was the Perſon, "out of whom our Lord had caſt ſeven Devils;" but then, if the Ejection of theſe Devils be underſtood (as ſome will have it) in an allegorical Senſe, the Words will well ſuit with the Sinner in St. Luke; or, ſuppoſe they were real Devils, the Ejection of them might be ſome Time before her coming into Simon's Houſe, and (as our Saviour's Vindication of her ſeems to employ) her Reformation conſequent thereupon, though Simon knew nothing of it. For theſe Reaſons ſome have imagined, that the Sinner in St. Luke, and Mary Magdalene, were both the ſame Perſon; and that ſhe was called Magdalene, from the Town and Caſtle of Magdal, where her Huſband, who had been a Man of great Diſtinction, but then dead, had lately his Habitation. It muſt not be

diſſembled

diſſembled however, that the moſt general and prevailing Opinion is, that theſe were two different and diſtinct Women.

The Manner of the Eaſtern People was to lie upon a kind of Bed or Couch, while they were at Meat; to put off their Sandals before they lay down, and to have their Servants and Domeſticks ſtand behind at their Feet; ſo that this Woman wanted not an Opportunity to expreſs her Devotion to our Lord, while he was in this Poſture.

That it was a cuſtomary Thing among the Ancients, eſpecially at great Entertainments, to uſe Ointments and coſtly Perfumes, appears from ſeveral Authorities. The Pſalmiſt plainly informs us, that this was the Cuſtom of the Jews, when in Acknowledgment of God's great Bounty to him, he declares, "Thou haſt prepared a Table for me, thou haſt anointed my Head with Oil, and my Cup ſhall be full," Pſal. xxiii. 5. The Scholiaſt upon Ariſtophanes acquaints us with the ſame Cuſtom among the Greeks, when he makes it a Rule, "that they who invite to an Entertainment, ſhould bring forth to their Gueſts Crowns and Ointments." The general Cuſtom indeed, upon theſe Occaſions, was to anoint the Head, and very ſeldom the Feet: But, beſides that the latter was a Token of more Humility, and no leſs Eſteem in this Woman, ſhe could not perhaps have an Opportunity of coming at our Saviour's Head, without giving ſome Diſturbance to the Company.

Though the Jewiſh Religion permitted Harlots of their own Nation to enjoy all the Privileges of other Women, except that their Oblations were rejected as impure, yet the Phariſees, who pretended to a greater Degree of Sanctity than others, would not admit them to civil Uſage, or the common Benefits of Society, and thought Religion itſelf, and the Honour of every Prophet, concerned in this Preciſeneſs. This was the Reaſon of Simon's making this Objection within himſelf: But therein he draws three falſe Concluſions, firſt, That had Jeſus been a Prophet, he muſt have known what the Woman was; as if Prophets knew every Thing, and were able to look into the Secrets of the Heart. 2dly, That, as this Woman was a Sinner, our Saviour ſhould not have ſuffered her to touch him; as if the external Touch of a Perſon, engaged in any vicious Courſe, could communicate Pollution to one that was innocent. And 3dly, That this Woman, whom he knew to be a Sinner ſome Time before, was ſtill in the ſame Condition; as if it were not in the Power of God, at any Time, to touch the Heart, and, in a Moment, to inſpire ſincere Repentance.

It was cuſtomary, ſays St. Jerom, on Matt. xxvii. 55. among the Jews, for Women, and eſpecially for Widows, to miniſter Neceſſaries to their Teachers, and this without any Scandal or Imputation upon their Honour. Our Saviour lays it down as a general Rule, that, "the Labourer is worthy of his Hire," Luke x. 7. and the Apoſtle accounts it no more than Juſtice, that they who ſow to others ſpiritual Things,

Things, ſhould be allowed to reap their carnal, 1 Cor. ix. 11. Of what Condition or Quality theſe Women were, that attended our Lord, we are not told: They might be Virgins, Widows, or Wives, who had an Allowance for themſelves from their Huſbands: However, it could be no Injuſtice done to their Families, to give unto him, who was Lord of all that they, and their Huſbands poſſeſſed; and who, "though he was rich, yet, for our ſakes, became poor, that we, through his Poverty, might be rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9.

That which made the Phariſees thus calumniate our Saviour's Miracles, was their finding the People induced by them to believe, that he was the Son of David, Matt. xii. 23. which was but another Word for the Meſſiah, the King of the Jews. For, though they might have ſome Apprehenſions, that if this Belief obtained, it might poſſibly bring the Power of the Romans upon them, John ix. 48. yet their chief Fear was, that the Greatneſs of his Miracles, and Excellence of his Doctrine, would put an End to their Credit and Authority among the People, ſince they were conſcious to themſelves, that they could not vie with him in either.

By ſeveral Paſſages in the Goſpel, it ſeems evident, that the Jews, at this Time, had a Notion of a kind of Empire, and Subordination among the infernal Powers, and that the Prince of this Empire was called Beelzebub. Beelzebub ſignifies properly the God of Flies; but why a Name of ſo mean an Import ſhould denote the Head of the apoſtate Angels, it is not ſo eaſy a Matter to determine, unleſs we will admit of this Conjecture, viz. that, as the People of Ekron had an Idol, which they ſtiled Beelſamen, i. e. the God of Heaven, by other Nations called Jupiter Olympius; the Jews, who uſed to give Nicknames, or Names of Contempt to all falſe Gods, called it ſometimes Beelzebub, or the God-Fly, becauſe theſe Heathens worſhipped it under the Figure of that Inſect, and ſometimes Beelzebub, or the God of Ordure, becauſe ſome ſort of Flies delight to feed on Excrements. However this be, 'tis certain that the Apoſtles, in ſeveral Places of their Writings, do ſeem to inſinuate, that among the apoſtate Spirits, there was one ſuperior to the reſt, whom therefore they call "the Prince of Darkneſs," Luke xvii. 53. "the Prince of this World," John xii. 31. and the "Prince of the Power of the Air," Eph. ii. 2. who, in the Days of Tobit, went under the Name of Aſmodeus, Chap. iii. 8. and is now by the Jews generally called Sammael, and by the Chriſtians, Lucifer.

That it was cuſtomary among the Jews to caſt out Devils, by the Invocation of the Name of the moſt High, we may learn from Juſtin Martyr; who in his Dialogue with Trypho, tell him, that "if any Jew exorciſed a Devil, in the Name of the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, perhaps, he would obey him;" as alſo from what Irenæus tells us, viz. that "by the Invocation of the Name of God, even before the Advent of our Lord, Men were ſaved from

from evil Spirits and all kind of Demons;" and from what Origen (cont. Celſ.) affirms, viz. that " the Name of the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, being uſed by the Jews, in the Incantation of Devils, did great Miracles:" And, if this was a common Practice among the Jews, then will the Force of our Saviour's Argument be this,—— " You make no doubt, but that your Exorciſts, who uſe the Name of God, do eject Devils by Virtue of that Name; and how partial is it then in you, to paſs an unjuſt Cenſure upon me, in whom you ſee far greater Evidences of the Finger of God, in my caſting out all manner of evil Spirits, and healing all kind of Diſeaſes."

But how can our Saviour be ſaid to have continued as long in the Grave, as Jonah did in the Whale's Belly, when there were no more than two Nights and one whole Day, between his Death and his Reſurrection? Now for a Reſolution of this, we muſt obſerve, firſt, That the Hebrews began their Computation of a natural Day from the Evening, or Night preceding; ſo that, from one Sun-ſet to another Sun-ſet, they reckoned a compleat Day, even as Moſes does when he ſays, " The Evening and the Morning were the firſt Day," Gen i. 5. 2dly, That it is a common Thing with them, as well as other Nations to put Part of a Day for the Whole, ſo that whatever is done in any Part of the Day, is properly enough ſaid to be done on that Day: And 3dly, That they uſually reckon that to be done in ſo many Days, or ſo many Days and Nights, which begins in any Part of the firſt, and ends in any Part of the laſt Day. Now allowing this manner of Computation, and reckoning that the firſt Day began on Thurſday at Sun-ſet, and ended upon Friday at Sun-ſet; ſince our Saviour died on Friday, about three in the Afternoon, by putting a Part for the Whole, here we have one Day. Saturday is allowed on all Hands to be another; and ſince the third Day began on Saturday at Sun-ſet, and our Saviour roſe on the Morning following, that Part of the Day being likewiſe put for the Whole, is fairly computed for the third. The Hebrew Child, according to Law, was to be circumciſed the eighth Day, but then the Day of its Birth, and of its Circumciſion were both counted; and, in like manner, if we reckon the Day on which Chriſt died, for one, and that on which he aroſe, for another, including withal the Night belonging to the former, we may properly enough ſay, that, in Imitation of the Prophet " Jonah, he was three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth."

The City Nineveh is generally ſuppoſed to have been built by Nimrod, was ſituated upon the River Tigris, and famous once for being the Metropolis of the firſt, i. e. the Aſſyrian Empire.

Sheba, or Saba, is a Province of Arabia Fælix, lying on the South of Judea, and on the extreme Part of the Continent, and, being bounded by the Ocean, is therefore ſaid to be the utmoſt Part of the Earth.

Our Saviour's Expreſſion, " ſhall riſe up in Judgment," is ſpoken in Alluſion

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to a Cuſtom among the Jews and Romans, which was, for the Witneſſes to riſe from their Seats, when they accuſed Criminals, or give any Evidence againſt them.

Since God had promiſed Solomon, that, as there was "none like him before him, ſo after him none ſhall ariſe like him" for Wiſdom, 1 Kings iii. 12. our Saviour's declaring, that in this Reſpect he was greater than Solomon, muſt be plainly avowing himſelf to be more than Man.

The Words in the Text are, "His Mother and his Brethren," Matt. xii. 46. but as the Word Brethren (according to the Language of the Jews, Gen. xxix. 12. Levit. x. 4.) is of great Latitude, theſe Brethren are ſuppoſed to be either Joſeph's Sons by a former Wife, and ſo our Saviour's Brothers-in-Law; or the Children of Mary, the Wife of Cleophas, and ſo his Couſin-germans. There is indeed a Tradition in the Church, that before his eſpouſing the Virgin Mary, Joſeph had another Wife, whoſe Name was Iſcha, by whom he had ſix Children, four Sons, James, Joſeph, Simon, and Jude, and two Daughters, whoſe Names, ſome ſay, were Eſther and Thamar, others, Mary and Salome. But whoever compares Matt. xiii. 55. and xxvii. 56. Mark xv. 40. John xix. 25. together, will find, that the four Perſons, there ſaid to be our Saviour's Brethren, were the Sons of Mary the Wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, for the Name is all one, and Siſter to the Bleſſed Virgin; and ſo theſe Brethren of his (as we ſaid) were no more than his Couſin-germans. Others, however, ſtrenuouſly maintain the former Opinion, viz. that Mary, the Mother of Jeſus, was their Mother, i. e. their Step-Mother, and they conſequently his Brothers-in-law; and that, 1ſt, Becauſe this Opinion retains the proper Signification of the Word Brethren, in which the Jews always ſeem to uſe it, when they ſpeak of our Lord's Brethren and Siſters; and 2dly, Becauſe it agrees with the Senſe of Antiquity, which ever before St. Jerom's Time (ſays the learned Pearſon) looked upon them as the Brethren of our Lord, who lived with his Mother, and are therefore ſo frequently found together, Matt. xii. 46. John ii. 12.

"Who are my Mother and Brethren, &c." We have another Speech of our Saviour's, of a much ſuperior Import than this. For when a certain Woman in the Company, upon hearing his excellent Doctrine, broke out into this Exclamation, "Bleſſed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou haſt ſucked," his Reply is, "Yea, rather bleſſed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it," Luke xi. 27, 28. "For whoſoever ſhall do the Will of my Father, who is in Heaven, the ſame is my Brother, and Siſter, and Mother," Matt. xii. 50. which Texts do not derogate any Thing from the Honour truly due to the bleſſed Virgin, as the Mother of the Meſſiah, but only ſhew the Folly of ſome, who exalted her above Chriſt, whom Chriſt conſidered only as his Mother, and ſeems here to ſet beneath every true Believer; though, conſidered as a Believer likewiſe, ſhe has a juſt Title to Pre-eminence; and

it is, by that, ſhe is infinitely more happy, than if ſhe had only been his Mother, according to the Fleſh.

What this Houſe-keeper, mentioned Matt. xiii. 52. was in his own Family, that ſhould every Miniſter of the Goſpel be in the Church of Chriſt. He ſhould be thoroughly inſtructed in the Word of God, and capable of amaſſing a plentiful Proviſion of all Knowledge ſacred and profane. Above all, he ſhould be a perfect Maſter of the Law and the Prophets, acquainted with all Senſes, and capable to penetrate into their Myſteries: to know, more eſpecially, wherein the Goſpel, which Chriſt came to preach, differs from the Law given by Moſes, and to ſhew the Accompliſhment of the one, in the Publication of the other. For this was required, even in the Levitical Diſpenſation, that the Prieſts Lips ſhould preſerve Knowledge, that the People, who ſought the Law at their Mouths, might not be diſappointed, Mal. ii. 7.

Let us now go on with our Narrative.

He had not continued long in the City Capernaum, before he reſolved to croſs the Lake, or Sea of Galilee, and to that Pupoſe had ordered his Diſciples to prepare a Veſſel for him, wherever he went; But juſt as he was going on Board, a certain Scribe came and offered to attend him wherever he went; but when he underſtood that no temporal Emolument was to be obtained by ſuch Attendance, he very probably retracted. A Diſciple of his own, at the ſame Time, deſired Leave to bury his Father, before he went along with him, but he commanded him to follow and to leave ſuch Offices to the Children of this World; and, when another was for taking Leave of his Family, and diſpoſing of his Effects, before he went, our Saviour let him know, "That whoever laid his Hand on the Plough, and looked back, was not fit for the Kingdom of God."

To put the Hand to the Plough, is a proverbial Saying, not only among the Greeks and Hebrews, but among other Nations, and denotes in general the Beginning of any Enterprize. This our Saviour applies to ſpiritual Huſbandry; and thereby gives us to underſtand, that as he who undertakes to plow, ſhould not look behind him, for fear of making his Furrow crooked or unequal; ſo he that engages in the Miniſtry of the Goſpel; ſhould not ſuffer himſelf to be encumbered with much ſerving about other Matters, but in the Language of the Apoſtle, "forgetting thoſe Things that are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe Things which are before, preſs toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of Jeſus Chriſt," Phil. iii. 13, 14.

While the Ship was under Sail, and Jeſus aſleep in the Stern, there aroſe a moſt terrible Storm, ſo violent and impetuous, that the whole Ship was almoſt ſwallowed up by the Waves. Hereupon his Diſciples, in great Conſternation, awoke him; and when he aroſe, at his rebuking the Waves, they obeyed his command, and immediately compoſed themſelves into

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a profound Calm, to the no ſmall Aſtoniſhment of every one that ſaw it.

The next Morning, as our Lord landed on the Eaſt Side of the Lake, in that Part of the Province of Trachonitis, which is called the Country of the Gadarens, two Demoniacs, moſt grievouſly diſtracted, with ſome poor Rags about them, came running towards him. Hideous Spectacles were they both; but one much fiercer than the other, made diſmal Outcries, both Day and Night, and cut his Fleſh with ſharp Stones; and though he had been often bound with Fetters and Chains, yet he as often broke them in Pieces (ranging, with his Companion) among the Rock and Tombs, and ſo very furious and outrageous, that no Traveller durſt paſs that Way. Upon their Approach to Jeſus, the Devils (who ſpake by their Mouths) declared him to be the Son of God, and expreſſed their Fear of his being come to torment them before their Time. They acknowledged their Number to be vaſtly great; and (if he caſt them out of the poſſeſſed Perſon) implored of him to ſuffer them to enter into the Herd of Swine, that were feeding on the Mountains not far off. Accordingly he permitted them; whereupon the whole Herd, to the Number of two Thouſand, ran violently upon the Rocks, and caſting themſelves headlong into the Lake, were all drowned, and utterly loſt.

The Keepers of the Swine fled in the utmoſt Fright, and reported this ſtrange Accident in the City Gadara, and the neighbouring Villages, which brought great Multitudes to the Place, where they found the Man (who had been the moſt furious of the two) ſitting at our Saviour's Feet, cloathed, and in his perfect Senſes. But, whether it was that they took amiſs the Deſtruction of the Swine, or thought themſelves unworthy of his divine Preſence, ſo it was, that they intreated our Lord to depart out of their Country, which accordingly he did; but, inſtead of permitting the Man (out of whom he had caſt the moſt Devils) to go along with him, as he deſired, he ordered him "to return to his Houſe and his Friends and there to declare what wonderful Things the Lord had done for him."

As ſoon as our Lord had repaſſed the Lake, and was returned to Capernaum, the People came flocking about him, as uſual; and while he was teaching them, one Jairus, a chief Ruler of the Synagogue, falling proſtrate at his Feet, humbly beſought him to come and cure his Daughter, who was at the Point of Death; not doubting, but that if he laid his Hands upon her, ſhe would inſtantly recover. The Forwardneſs of the Ruler's Faith claimed our Saviour's Compaſſion and Aſſiſtance; and therefore he immediately roſe and followed him: But as he was on the Way, and preſſed with great Throngs of People, a certain Woman, who had been diſeaſed with an unnatural Flux of Blood for twelve Years, and, in Hopes of a Cure, had in vain ſpent all her Eſtate upon Phyſicians, being now confident, that if ſhe could but come to touch the Hem of his Garment, ſhe ſhould be healed, preſſed forward; and

having got a Touch of it privately (as ſhe thought) found herſelf perfectly ſound. But ſhe was not unknown to Jeſus, and therefore, when he perceived that "Virtue was gone out of him," he turned about in the Throng, and demanded who it was that had touched him? The poor Woman came trembling; and falling down at his Feet, declared to all the Company, both the Cauſe and miraculous Effect of her touching him, which he was ſo far from blaming, that he commended her Faith, and imputed her cure to the wonderful Strength of it.

During this Tranſaction, the Delay proved fatal (as one might imagine) to Jairus; for a Meſſage was brought him that his Daughter was actually dead, and therefore there was no Occaſion to give Jeſus any farther Trouble; but our Saviour, who over-heard what the Meſſenger ſaid, bade the Father not fear, but only believe, and then he ſhould find the bleſſed Effect of his Faith in the Recovery of his Daughter; and with theſe Words approaching the Houſe, they found the Muſicians and Mourners already come, who were deploring her Death, with melancholy Tones and loud Lamentations, according to the Cuſtom of thoſe Times. When Jeſus entered the Houſe, he deſired them to ceaſe their funeral Ceremonies, becauſe, at that Time, there was no occaſion for them; and ſo taking the Girl's Parents with Peter and James, and John, into the Chamber with him, he approached the Bed where ſhe lay, and taking her by the Hand, commanded her to riſe; at which powerful Word her Life was reſtored to her again, ſo that ſhe immediately roſe up, and walked round the Room, to the no ſmall Amazement of her Parents. At his Departure he ordered them to give her ſomething to eat, and left a ſtrict Charge with them, that they ſhould keep the Miracle ſecret; but their Joy was too great to conceal, what in Gratitude, for ſo great a Mercy, they thought they were obliged to divulge.

What might poſſibly be the Motive of the Scribe's offering to attend our Saviour, the Conjectures of Commentators have been different. Some think that he did it with a ſincere Deſire to become his Diſciple; others, with a deſign to turn Spy upon him; ſome, out of a Spirit of Vanity to diſtinguiſh himſelf by being a Retainer to a Maſter in ſo great Reputation among the People; and others, out of a Principle of Self-intereſt, that he might attain ſome Poſt of Honour and Advantage, upon our Lord's Advancement to his Kingdom. This, indeed, ſeems to be the moſt probable Ground of his Reſolution, and accordingly the Deſign of our Saviour's Anſwer is, to diſcourage him from being his Diſciple upon ſuch ſecular Views, "The Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Neſts, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his own Head," Luke xi. 58. And therefore much leſs any Accommodation or Proſpect of Preferment for his Followers.

Some are of Opinion, that the Diſciple who requeſted to bury his Father, was St. Philip, who was the firſt that adjoined

adjoined himſelf to Jeſus, and that his Father was not actually dead, but only grown ſo very old, that he could not live long; and therefore the Purport of his Addreſs to Chriſt is, "That for the ſmall Remainder of his Father's Life he might be permitted to live with him, but that, after he had paid his laſt Offices to him, he would not fail to return again, and devote himſelf entirely to his Service:" But others underſtand the Words in a literal Senſe.

The Words in the Text, "Let the Dead bury the Dead," Matt. viii. 22. are a Form of Speech common in all Sorts of Authors, when, in the ſame Place they uſe the ſame Word twice, though very frequently in different Senſes. Thus the Pſalmiſt, ſpeaking of God, ſays, "With the froward thou ſhalt ſhew thyſelf froward," Pſal. xviii. 28. even as Moſes introduces God ſpeaking of himſelf, "If ye walk contrary to me, I will alſo walk contrary to you," Lev. xxvii. 23, 24. where the Words froward and contrary, as they relate to God, denote the Puniſhments which he intended to bring upon the Obſtinate, and are the rather uſed, becauſe the ſame Words went before. And in like Manner, "Let the Dead bury the Dead, but follow thou me," may ſignify, let others bury the Dead, thou haſt Work of more Conſequence to do. It muſt not be diſſembled however, that by the Dead, both ſacred and profane Authors do frequently mean, not only thoſe, who in a natural Senſe are ſo, by being alienated from the Life of God, but dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins. Thus Clemens of Alexandria tells us, that the Philoſophers of the Barbarians called thoſe dead, who deſerted their Doctrines, and ſubjected their Minds to ſenſual Pleaſures, which Philo calls the Death of the Soul, entombed in Paſſions and all Manner of Wickedneſs. And therefore the full Import of our Saviour's Words muſt be, "Let theſe, who are unconcerned for the Things of God, and unfit to engage in promoting them, perform ſuch Offices, which they can do, as well as others; but thou who haſt begun to follow me, and to attend upon the Kingdom of God, go on with Reſolution, and without allowing thyſelf any Avocation from that Work:" Hereby teaching us, that they, who are called to the Preaching of the Goſpel, and the Salvation of Souls, ſhould not ſuffer any earthly Buſineſs, which may be done as well by others, who are unfit to be employed in Spirituals, to give them the leaſt Impediment or Moleſtation.

The Country Trachonitis, which is ſo called by the Greeks from its rough and craggy Mountains, together with Ituræa, made, in our Saviour's Time, one Tetrarchy, i. e. one fourth Part, or rather Diviſion (for they were not equal Parts) of the Kingdom of Herod the Great, when he died. It was antiently called Argob, Deut. iii. 13. and according to the beſt Account, is bounded on the Eaſt by Arabia Deſerta, on the Weſt by Batanea, on the South by Iturea, and on the North by the Country of Damaſcus. And as it was a Province full of rocky Hills, which

which ſerved for an Harbour to a great Number of Thieves and Robbers, it often found Employment for Herod the Great, as we may ſee in the Hiſtory of Joſephus.

The Country of the Gadarens, in St. Matthew, is called the Country of the Gargeſenes, becauſe it lay in the Neighbourhood of the two Cities Gadara and Gargeſa, which were both ſituated in the Diſtrict of Decapolis. Gadara, which took its Name from the Tribe of Gad, to whom it fell by Lot in the Diviſion of the Land, was a famous City beyond Jordan, the Capital of Paræa, and ſtood Eaſtward of the Sea of Tiberias, about ſixty Furlongs from the Shore. Gargeſa was a Place of ſome Importance likewiſe, according to Hiſtorians; and the near Adjacency of theſe two Towns made the Evangeliſts call the Country that lay between them, ſometimes by one Name, and ſometimes by another.

There is ſome Difference between the Evangeliſts in their Account of the Cure of the Demoniacks: For, whereas St. Mark, chap. v. 2. and St. Luke, chap. viii. 27. take Notice only of one Demoniack; St. Matthew, chap. vii. 28. makes Mention of two. Now, to reconcile this ſeeming Difference, Dr. Lightfoot ingeniouſly conjectures, that one of theſe two was a Gargeſene and a Jew, and ſo, in caſting the Devil out of him, our Lord did no more than what he had frequently done in Judea, but the other a Gadarene, i. e. one of an Heathen City, as Joſephus teſtifies, for which Reaſon St. Mark and St. Luke chiefly take Notice of him, as a more remarkable Inſtance, becauſe he, and the Syrophœnician Woman were the only two Heathens, that we read of, our Saviour cured. But there is a farther Reaſon for the Evangeliſt's taking Notice of one rather than the other; and that is, That the one, in his Behaviour, was more remarkable than the other; was poſſeſſed with an unclean Spirit, called himſelf Legion, and could not be bound with Fetters or Chains; went about naked, and cutting himſelf with Stones; and when he was cured, diſtinguiſhed himſelf by deſiring to follow Chriſt: Circumſtances all which St. Matthew omits, but St. Mark and St. Luke have particularly related, and upon theſe Accounts, might very likely think, that he fell more properly under their Conſideration, than the other.

The Tombs which the Evangeliſts here mention, are ſaid to be in the Mountains, and in the Wilderneſs: For the Cuſtom of the Jews was to have their Tombs, like ſo many little Cells cut out in the Sides of Caverns, and hollow Parts of Rocks and Mountains, at ſome Diſtance from their Towns, and uſually in very lonely and deſart Places; into which it was uſual for the Devils to compel thoſe whom they poſſeſſed, in order to confirm Men in the vain Perſuaſion that the Souls of thoſe that died in any Crime, where after Death turned into Devils.

St. Jerom, upon the Devil's Queſtion to our Saviour, is apt to imagine, that as Slaves, who have a long while run from their Maſter, no ſooner ſee his Face, but they bethink themſelves of the

the Puniſhment wich they have deſerved; ſo the Devils, finding our Saviour upon Earth, thought, at firſt Sight, that he was come to judge and condemn them, and therefore they aſk, "Art thou come hither to torment us before our Time?" i. e. before the Time of the laſt Judgment, when they expected no more than to be eternally puniſhed, or (as the Scripture expreſſes it) "to be caſt into the Lake of Fire and Brimſtone for ever."

One Reaſon, as ſome imagine, why this Man deſired to be with Chriſt, was his Fear leſt the Devil, at his Departure, ſhould ſeize upon him again: and it was partly to avoid the Suſpicion of vain Glory, leſt our Lord might have given ſome Umbrage, had he carried about with him, all thoſe upon whom his greateſt Miracles were wrought, and partly to ſhew, that in his Abſence he was able to protect ſuch as believe and truſt in him, from the Malice of evil Spirits, that he would not accept of his Company.

Some learned Men are of opinion, that Jairus, the Ruler of the Synagogue, was the Preſident of the Conſiſtory of the Twenty-three Judges which were appointed in every City, to puniſh ſuch Offences as were not capital; but it is more generally thought, that he was not a civil Magiſtrate, but a leading Man in the Synagogue of Capernaum, who had, in a great Meaſure, under his Direction ſuch Things as related to the Service of God. We are to obſerve, however, that the Word Archiſynagogos is ſometimes taken in a ſtrict Senſe for the Perſon who was the Preſident, the Head and Maſter of the Synagogue, who according to this Acceptation, was but one; and at other Times, in a larger Senſe, ſo as to comprehend the Preſbyters and Elders likewiſe, in which Acceptation, the Rulers of the Synagogue were more than one. How many they were, is no where declared, becauſe that depended upon the largeneſs of the City, and Number of thoſe who frequented the Place of divine Worſhip: only we may obſerve, that Jairus was not the chief Preſident, becauſe he is called "one of the Rulers of the Synagogue," Mark v. 22.

Euſebius tells us for a Certainty, that the Woman with a Bloody-flux was a Gentile, living in Paneas, or Cæſarea Philippi, a Town ſituated near the Head of the River Jordan, and upon the Report of others, relates this Story. "That by the Gate of this Woman's Houſe, was erected a Braſs Statue, bearing the Effigy of a Woman upon her Knees, in the Poſture of a Suppliant; that oppoſite to her, there ſtood the Effigy of a Man in Braſs, reſembling our Saviour, ſtretching out his Hand to the Woman; that at the Feet of this Statue, an unknown Plant ſprung up, which reaching to the Borders of his Garments, became a preſent Remedy againſt all Manner of Diſeaſes; and that theſe Statues were ſtanding even unto the Time of the Emperor Maximinus, who took them away from this City." But (not to inſiſt on the many Exceptions that might be made to this Story, which favours much of the Superſtition of later

later Times) how a Woman, who, as all the Evangeliſts inform us, had ſpent all that ſhe had, ſhould be able to erect two ſuch coſtly Statues, or how the Jews, in all their Wars, or the Gentiles, who were both bitter Enemies to Chriſtianity, ſhould ſuffer ſuch a Confirmation of it to remain ſo long, we can by no Means imagine.

Hence it is evident, that the Virtue whereby our Saviour did theſe miraculous Cures, was not communicated to him, but reſided in him, and conſequently proves that he was God. For the Virtue whereby the Prophets and Apoſtles did their Cures, is aſcribed to God; as when it is ſaid, that "God did ſpecial Miracles by the Hand of Paul," Acts xix. 11. But the Miracles done by Chriſt, are imputed to the "Virtue, which went out of him, and healed all that ſought to touch him," Luke vi. 19. The Virtues going out of him, however, is a vulgar Expreſſion, which muſt not be taken in its literal Senſe, as if it were a Quality diſtinct from the Perſon of Chriſt, and what might paſs from him to another; becauſe the divine Power reſiding in him, was incapable of any Alienation or Diminution, be the Cures he performed never ſo many, or never ſo miraculous; and therefore the only Meaning of the Expreſſion muſt be, that it went out, with Regard to us, or according to our Conception and Apprehenſion of Things, when it diſcovered and manifeſted itſelf in the Cure of ſome Diſeaſe, or any outward Effects.

Our Saviour's Diſciples, we find, admired at his aſking this Queſtion, Luke v. 31. But the Reaſon for his doing ſo, we may ſuppoſe, was to diſcover to the People the Greatneſs of the Miracle, which, without this Examination, might have gone off without being known; to ſhew them the Strength and Virtue of the Woman's Faith and Confidence in his Power; and thence to convince Jairus, who began a little to ſtagger in his Faith, that he was able to revive his Daughter, even though ſhe was dead, if he did but believe.

In all the Books of the Old Teſtament, there is not the leaſt Hint given us of any muſical Inſtruments, employed in Funerals. We read, indeed, a good deal of mourning for the Dead, of Mourners hired on purpoſe, and of the diſmal ditties, which theſe People ſung, to excite Sorrow in others: But the Uſe of Muſick was reckoned an incongruous Thing, and no ways comporting with the Solemnity of this ſad Seaſon. Among Heathen Authors there is frequent Mention made of it, as a Thing long in Uſe, both with the Greeks and Romans; and therefore we may preſume, that from theſe Nations it was, that the Jews borrowed and adopted it into their Funeral Ceremonies. That among them it was in Uſe in our Saviour's Time, at leaſt among Perſons of the better Rank, is plain from the Paſſage now before us; that it was an eſtabliſhed Cuſtom in the Time of Joſephus, is evident from his own Teſtimony; and that it grew into a Kind of ſuperſtitious Uſe, in the Times following, is evident from what the Rabbins enjoin, viz.

viz. that none, even of the meaner Sort, ſhould, at the Funeral of a Wife, have fewer than two Flutes, beſides the Voices of old Women, who, by their ſad Modulation, were to extort Lamentation from others.

The Reaſon which our Saviour gives for his deſiring them to ceaſe their funeral Ceremonies, is, that "the Maid is not dead, but aſleep," Luke viii. 52. Now, in ſeveral Places of the New Teſtament eſpecially, Death is called a Sleep, John xi. 11. Acts vii. 60. 1 Cor. xv. 6, &c. and therefore our Saviour only makes uſe of this Word of a ſofter Signification, not ſo much with a Deſign to impoſe upon thoſe to whom he had directed his Speech, as to teſtify his Humility and great Modeſty, in his Deſire to conceal his divine Power. The Perſons he ſpoke to, were certainly thoſe who were preparing for her Interment, and performing the Funeral Rites belonging to it; and therefore he only intimates, that ſhe was not dead, as they accounted her, i. e. not to come to Life again before the Reſurrection; but that her Death was no more than what he could remove, with the ſame Facility, as another might be awakened out of Sleep.

Let us now explain ſome Things in this Period of the Hiſtory. Returning from the Houſe of Jairus, our Lord was followed in the Streets by two blind Men, imploring his Aid, who, as ſoon as he had entered the Houſe, came after him, and when he had cured them, were diſmiſſed with a ſtrict Charge to conceal the Miracle, which out of the Abundance of their Joy they could not do. And, no ſooner were the blind Men gone, but the People brought to him a dumb Man, poſſeſſed with a Devil, which when he had caſt out, the Perſon immediately recovered his Speech, to the great Aſtoniſhment of the Multitude, who unanimouſly acknowledged, that the like had never been ſeen in Iſrael; only the Phariſees perſiſted in their old Malice, and inſinuated to the People (as formerly) that he ejected Devils, by the Help of ſome ſupreme Devil, who had the reſt under his Controul, and with whom he was Confederate.

After a ſhort Stay at Capernaum, our Lord departed, with his Diſciples, into ſome other Parts of Galilee. About a Year before he had been barbarouſly treated by the Inhabitants of Nazareth, the Place of his Education; and yet, notwithſtanding this, he was reſolved once more to make them a freſh Tender of Mercy. To this Purpoſe he went into their Synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and taught the People; but inſtead of being converted to the Faith, though they were aſtoniſhed at his Abilities, they were ſcandalizing his Perſon, and began to upbraid him with the Meanneſs of his Parentage and Employment, as they had done before; inſomuch that being ſenſible, that a "Prophet never wanted Honour, but in his own Country," he did not abide with them long, nor did he work any Miracles there (except the Cure of a few ſick Perſons) by Reaſon of their Infidelity.

Upon his Departure from Nazareth, he viſited moſt of the Cities and Villages of Galilee, teaching in the Synagogues, preaching the Goſpel and curing all Kinds of Diſeaſes among the People; and as he obſerved, one Day, the numerous Throngs and Multitudes that reſorted to him, he looked upon them with an Eye of Pity and Compaſſion, as ſo many Sheep diſperſed and deſtitute of Shepherds, and from thence formed a Reſolution to ſend out his twelve Apoſtles (by two and two together) into the more diſtant Parts of Judea, whilſt himſelf continued preaching in Galilee, and the Places adjacent.

To this Purpoſe, he inveſted them with a full Power to cure all Diſeaſes, eject Devils, and even raiſe the Dead. He gave them Inſtructions in what Manner they were to behave in the Places whither they went: But forbad them, at the ſame Time, to addreſs themſelves to any of the Gentiles or Samaritans, but only "to the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of Iſrael," Matt. x. 16. He told them the Conſequence of their Miniſtry, which (after his Death more eſpecially) inſtead of intitling them to temporal Advantages, would expoſe them to ſundry Kinds of Perſecutions; but for their Encouragement he acquainted them, that thoſe who rejected their Meſſage, ſhould be treated with Severity at leaſt at the righteous Judgment of God: whereas thoſe that received them kindly, and gave, were it but a "Cup of cold Water," to the leaſt of his Diſciples, for their Maſter's Sake, "ſhould in no wiſe miſs of his Reward."

With this Commiſſion the Apoſtles went into all Parts of Paleſtine, where the Jews inhabited, preaching the Goſpel and the Doctrine of Repentance, as Part of it, working Miracles for its Confirmation, and anointing the Sick for a Token of their Recovery, whilſt our Lord continued the Courſe of his Miniſtry in Galilee. It was now about a Year ſince Herod Antipas had committed John the Baptiſt cloſe Priſoner to the Caſtle Machæras, and upon the Return of his Birth-day, having made a ſplendid Entertainment for the Lords and chief Officers of his Dominions, he was infinitely pleaſed with the Dancing of a young Lady, Daughter to his unlawful Wife, Herodias; inſomuch, that in the Height of his Mirth and Jollity, he promiſed (with the Addition of an Oath) to grant her whatever ſhe demanded, though it amounted to Half of his Dominions. Unwilling to loſe ſo fair an Opportunity ſhe immediately conſulted with her Mother what Favour to aſk, who being prompted by the Height of her Malice and Revenge, named the Head of John the Baptiſt to be given her, which the Daughter accordingly demanded of the King, in the Preſence of the whole Aſſembly.

This ſtrange Requeſt, at firſt cauſed an exceeding damp upon the King's Spirits; but having recovered himſelf (out of a pretended Reverence to his Oath, and Reſpect to his Nobility, then preſent) he ſent an Executioner, who beheaded John, and brought his Head in a Charger to the young Lady, which ſhe preſented to the Mother; but, as for

for his Body, his Diſciples, when they came to hear of his Death, took care to bury it, and to bring to Jeſus the News of the tragical Fate that had befallen their Maſter.

The following Obſervations will explain what may ſeem difficult in the foregoing Narration.

The Greek Word we tranſlate Carpenter, is of general Signification, and denotes any Worker, either in Wood, Metal, or Stone; but the Tradition of the Church has all along been, that our bleſſed Saviour was what our Tranſlation has ſpecified, a Carpenter; and Juſtin Martyr aſſures us, that he made Plows and Yokes, which at that Time were the Carpenter's Buſineſs. However this be, it is certain, that by the Jewiſh Canons, all Parents were bound to teach their Children ſome Trade; that their moſt celebrated Rabbins thought it a great Reproach not to be of ſome Profeſſion; and that there was a peculiar Reaſon why our Saviour ſhould be of one, and that no very liberal one neither, even to take off all Suſpicion of his being bred up in curious Arts, which his Enemies at all Times were forward enough to ſay, notwithſtanding the Diſadvantages of his Education.

Among all the Accounts which the Heathens have given us of their famous Magicians and Workers of Wonders, there are none to be found, who pretended to a Power to delegate their Virtue to others, or to impart their Power to them, upon the Invocation of their Names, or Belief of their Doctrine. Hence Arnobius having ſummed up the Miracles which our Saviour did, adds, That he "not only did them by his Power, but permitted many others to do them by Invocation of his Name; nor did he any peculiar and aſtoniſhing Miracles himſelf, that he did not enable his little one's, and even Ruſticks to perform:" Whereupon he aſks thoſe he writes to, "Did ever that Jupiter, whom the Romans worſhip in their Capitol, give the like Power to any Mortal?" And then concludes this to be a Demonſtration of a truly divine Power: "For to transfer your miraculous Power to a Man, and to give Authority and Strength to a Creature to do that, which you alone can do, is an infallible Evidence of one that hath Power over all, and the Cauſes of all Things at his Beck."

He calls all Iſrael Sheep, though they were not obedient to the Voice of their Shepherds, as not being all choſen People. He calls them loſt Sheep, becauſe they were in great Danger of being loſt and ruined by the Ignorance and Wickedneſs of their Guides; and to them the Apoſtles were ſent, becauſe they were the Children of the Kingdom, Matt. viii. 12. to whom the Promiſe of the Meſſiah was made, Gen. xvii. 1. and of whom concerning the Fleſh he came, Rom. ix. 5. and therefore it was the divine Will that they ſhould be firſt honoured with the Preaching of the Goſpel who alone enjoyed the Miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt and his Diſciples, while he continued upon Earth: But upon their rejecting of ſo great Salvation, the Apoſtle's Commiſſion was enlarged. For "it

was neceſſary (ſays St. Paul to the Jews) that the Word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to you, but ſeeing you put it from you, and judge yourſelves unworthy of everlaſting Life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles," Acts xiii. 46.

That it was uſual with the Jews to preſcribe Oil as a proper Thing to anoint the Sick, in order to their Recovery, Dr. Lightfoot, upon Mark vi. 13. has fully proved; nor can we think that the Apoſtles having no Command from Chriſt to do ſo, would have uſed this Ceremony, had it not been cuſtomary among their Countrymen: But whether they did it ſymbolically, in Hopes of obtaining to the Patient the Oil of Gladneſs, or only medicinally; it is certain that the Virtue which attended it, when uſed by the Apoſtles, could not be natural, and inherent in the Oil, but muſt be ſupernatural, and derived from him who ſent them, becauſe this Unction always produced a certain and conſtant Cure in thoſe that were anointed.

Both the City and Fort which were called by the Name of Machæras, were ſituated beyond Jordan, about two Leagues from that River, on the North-eaſt Side of the Lake Aſphaltites, or Dead-Sea, and not far diſtant from the Place where that River diſcharges itſelf into it. It was in the Hands of Aretas, King of Arabia, when he married his Daughter to Herod Antipas, but how it afterwards came into Herod's Poſſeſſion (as it certainly was, when he beheaded John the Baptiſt) we have no Account from Hiſtory.

That it was an uſual Cuſtom with Kings to celebrate the Day of their Birth, and that of their Acceſſion to the Throne (for the Word may be applied to either) with great Solemnity, we have an Example as old as Pharaoh. Gen. xl. 20. nor need we doubt, but that, on ſuch joyful Occaſions, there were Muſick and Dancing, and all Manner of Diverſions to entertain the Company: But that Perſons of the firſt Rank and Diſtinction ſhould act any Part in theſe Diverſions, was a rare and unwonted Thing; and therefore St. Chryſoſtom is of Opinion, that Herodias, foreſeeing what would happen, forced this young Lady upon a Thing which would better become an Actreſs upon the Stage.

This Herodias, (as Joſephus relates the Matter) " in Contempt of the Laws of her Country, married again to Herod, the natural Brother of her Huſband, ſeparating herſelf from him, whilſt living, although he had a Child by her;" ſo that being guilty both of Inceſt and Adultery, ſhe might well be called his unlawful Wife.

It may not be improper here, to take Notice of the remarkable Providence of God, in avenging the Death of this righteous Man upon Herod, Herodias, and her Daughter. 1ſt, As the War between Herod, and Aretas King of Arabia, was occaſioned by Herod's wicked Contract with Herodias to eject his Daughter, who was his lawful Wife, and to marry her who was his Brother Philip's; ſo Joſephus declares, that the Jews looked upon his putting John to Death, as the Cauſe of the Miſcarriage of his Army, God being angry

angry with him for the Death of John the Baptiſt. 2dly, Envying the Glory of her Brother Agrippa, upon whom Caligula had conferred the Title of a King, Herodias prevailed with her Huſband to repair to Rome, in order to requeſt the like Favour of the Emperor; but the Emperor, having received a bad Impreſſion againſt him, inſtead of granting what he deſired, deprived him of his Government, and baniſhed both her and him to Lyons in France, where they lived ingloriouſly, and died miſerably; and this, according to Joſephus, "was done in Puniſhment of her Envy, and of his Readineſs to hearken to her Solicitations." And 3dly, Of her Daughter it is related, that as ſhe was going over the Ice in Winter, the Ice broke and let her in up to the Head, which, upon the meeting of the Ice again was ſevered from her Body. And this Story, if it be true, (as it is confidently told us by Nicephorus) is a wonderful Inſtance of God's avenging Providence.

Herod was no more than a Tetrarch, or one of thoſe Four among whom his Father's Kingdom was divided; but St. Mark, Chap. vi. 14. gives him the Title of a King, as himſelf no doubt was fond enough of it, and perhaps, in the Provinces under his Dominion, was generally called by it. Why he came to be concerned at the young Lady's deſiring ſo ſtrange a Boon as that of the Baptiſt's Head, is no Wonder. The very Mention of ſuch a Thing from ſuch a Perſon, and in ſuch an Aſſembly, was enough to ſhock any Man of leſs than uncommon Barbarity; but then the Evangeliſt informs us, that Herod had conceived a good Opinion of the Baptiſt, as a juſt and holy Man, and when he heard him (as he did it very gladly) in many Things he followed his Advice, Mark vi. 20. and not only ſo, but feared the Reſentment of the People likewiſe (with whom he was in high Eſteem) when they ſhould come to be informed of the Cauſe and Circumſtance of his Death, Matt. xiv. 5. There might, however, be another Reaſon, leſs obſerved, for Herod's Concern upon this Occaſion. It was now his Birth-day; and it was uſual even among Heathen Princes, at ſuch a Time, to be gay and merry, to think of no ill Omens, to ſurceaſe all Contentions, and not ſo much as to deprive of Life, even condemned Criminals, on that Day, when the Sovereign of the Country received his, leſt they ſhould offend or ſadden the Genius that preſided over their Nativity: And therefore it is more than probable, that Herod, who was more than half a Pagan, might have the ſame Notion of the Thing. But, if he had not, it can hardly be thought, but that ſuch an Execution would damp the Joy of the Meeting, and procure him more Enemies among the thinking Part of the Company, than the Non-performance of a wicked and illegal Oath could have done.

The Greek Word which we render Executioner, in the Hiſtory of the Roman Emperors, ſignifies a "Soldier of the Guard, and among the Jews, Romans, Chaldæans, and Egyptians, it was cuſtomary for one of the King's Guard

Guard to be the Executioner of thoſe whom he had condemned to Death.

Thus died the great Fore-runner of our Bleſſed Saviour, about two Years and three Months after his Entrance upon his publick Miniſtry, in the thirty-fifth Year of his Age, and was the firſt who ſuffered upon the Account of the Goſpel, though ſeldom called the firſt Martyr. "He was, indeed, a Man (according to the Character which Joſephus gives of him) endued with all Virtue, who exhorted the Jews to the Practice of Juſtice towards Men, and Piety towards God, and alſo to Baptiſm, which would become acceptable to God, if they renounced their Sins, and to the Clearneſs of their Bodies, added the Purity of Souls.

When Herodias had got the Baptiſt's Head in her Poſſeſſion, it is ſaid, that ſhe thruſt his Tongue through with her Bodkin; and for Fear that the Head, if buried with the Body, ſhould be re-united, and riſe again to diſturb her unlawful Luſt, and diſquiet Herod's Conſcience, ſhe buried it in her own Palace; but where his Apoſtles buried his Body the Evangeliſts have not informed us, only we are told, that in the Time of Julian the Apoſtate, his Tomb was ſhewn at Samaria, where the Inhabitants of the Country opened it, and burnt Part of his Bones; but the reſt were ſaved by ſome Chriſtians, that carried them to one Philip, an Abbot of Jeruſalem, who preſented them to St. Athanaſius; but ſome Time after, when Theodoſius built a Church, in Honour of the Baptiſt, in the Place where the Temple of Serapis ſtood, Ann. Dom. 396, theſe Holy Relicks were repoſited in it: Though what became of his Head, we no where read, only the Abbot Villeloin tells us, in his Memoirs, that he ſaw one at Amiens; but this was the fifth or ſixth Head of the Baptiſt, that, in the Courſe of his Travels, he had the Honour to kiſs.

Let us now reſume our Story. About the ſame Time that Jeſus was informed of John's Death by his Diſciples, his own Apoſtles returned from their ſeveral Journies, and gave him an Account of all their Tranſactions. The Fame of the Miracles, which our Saviour, both by himſelf and his Apoſtles, had wrought, gave Herod ſome Umbrage, to think that the Perſon who did them, was John, whom he had unjuſtly murdered, and who now, very probably, was riſen from the Dead to revenge his Blood upon him; and therefore, knowing the Subtilty and Cruelty of that Prince, our Saviour ordered his Apoſtles to prepare a Veſſel, wherein he and they only, might croſs the Sea of Galilee, and retire for a little while from the Multitude, to a Deſart near Bethſaida. But in vain was it for him to think of concealing himſelf: The People ſeeing where he took Shipping, ran after him on Foot by the Lake-ſide; and though they had a great Circuit of Land to take, were got into the Deſart almoſt as ſoon as he; which ſingular Inſtance of their Zeal ſo affected his Compaſſion, that, though he came to that Place for the Sake of Retirement, he could no longer withhold his Preſence from them; but, aſcending a Mountain, and taking his

his Diſciples with him, he there firſt inſtructed them in ſeveral Things concerning the Kingdom of God, and having afterwards cured their Sick and Diſeaſed, he, at laſt, fed them all, to the Number of five thouſand Men, beſides Women and Children, with five Barley-loaves and two ſmall Fiſhes (having firſt invoked a Bleſſing upon them) and that with a Plenty ſo exuberant, that the very Fragments which remained filled twelve Baſkets.

This miraculous Multiplication made ſuch an Impreſſion upon the Multitude, that they no longer doubted of his being the Meſſiah, and were therefore reſolved to ſet him up for their King by main Force; but he knowing the Miſchief of ſuch a Deſign, conſtrained his Diſciples (who were forward enough perhaps to join in the Thing) immediately to take Shipping, and to paſs by Bethſaida to Capernaum, whilſt himſelf diſmiſſed the Multitude; and (when he had ſo done) continued till after Midnight in Meditation and Prayer.

In the time mean the Ship, where the Apoſtles were on Board, was toſſed with a great Storm in the Middle of the Lake. The Waves ran ſo high, and the Wind was ſo contrary, that as ſoon as Morning appeared, they had not got much above a League on their Voyage, when our Saviour came walking on the Surface of the Sea, and drew near towards the Ship. This ſtrange Appearance (which they took for a Spirit) increaſed their Fear not a little. Our Lord indeed, to diſpel it, told them who he was; but Peter, ſtill doubtful, wanted a Demonſtration, which when he permitted him to try, and the Apoſtle, upon the Experiment, was ready to ſink, he graciouſly reached out his Hand, and, with a gentle Rebuke for the Weakneſs of his Faith, ſetting him again upon the Top of the Waves, walked along with him to the Veſſel; which they had no ſooner entered, but the Winds, knowing their Duty to their Sovereign, ceaſed. The reſt of the Diſciples obſerving, came and adored Jeſus, acknowledging his Omnipotence, and admiring the Divinity of his Power and Perſon; and as it was not long before the Ship gained the Port, great Numbers out of the Country, as ſoon as they underſtood that he was arrived, brought their Sick and Diſeaſed on Beds, and laid them before him in the Streets, beſeeching him to permit them only to touch the Border " of his Garment, and as many as touched him were made whole."

The Multitudes, whom our Lord had miraculouſly fed in the Deſart near Bethſaida, were in Expectation of finding him the next Morning on the Mountain; for they had ſeen the Diſciples take Shipping without their Maſter, and no other Veſſel left for him: But, perceiving that he was gone as well as his Diſciples, and having an Opportunity of other Veſſels from Tiberias, they paſſed over with all Expedition to Capernaum, where they found him teaching in the Synagogues: And, being in no ſmall Surprize, deſired to know of him, how he got thither? But inſtead of gratifying their Curioſity with a direct Anſwer, he, who knew their corrupt Expectations, and that they

they came after him, not ſo much for his miraculous Gifts, as the Gratification of their own Appetites, took Occaſion from thence to diſcourſe to them of a certain Food, different from what he had given them in the Deſart of Bethſaida, infinitely more deſerving of their Inquiſition, and whereof the Manna in the Wilderneſs was no more than a Figure or a Type. What this Fruit was, he ſignified to them, viz. The Merits of his future Death and Paſſion, which alone could be available for the obtaining of eternal Life, to ſuch as believed in his divine Miſſion and Deſcent from Heaven.

But thoſe ſublime Truths, which, for the preſent, he thought proper to couch in Terms obſcure, and figurative enough, ſo gravelled the Intellects of his Auditory, that even his Diſciples began to murmur, and many of his Followers, miſtaking the Words in a literal, which he intended in a ſpiritual Senſe, and thence inferring, that he was not ſuch a Meſſiah as they imagined, wholly deſerted him; inſomuch that he began to ſuſpect the Fidelity of his very Apoſtles, until Peter (in Behalf of all the reſt) declared their fixed Purpoſe of adhering to him, under full Conviction, that he was the Meſſiah the Son of the living God. But notwithſtanding this liberal and frank Confeſſion, our Lord gave them to underſtand, that they were not all equally ſound, for "among the Twelve, whom he had ſelected, one of them was to prove a Traitor;" meaning this of Judas Iſcariot, who juſtly deſerved that Name, becauſe he afterwards betrayed him.

We ſhall now illuſtrate what we have related, with the following Obſervations.

Several of the ancient Jewiſh Writers, as well as ſome modern Rabbins, are of Opinion, that the Souls of Men and Women, when they died, went into other Bodies, inſomuch that they imagine, that the Soul of Moſes was the ſame with that of Abel: and that of the Egyptian whom Moſes ſlew, the ſame with that of Cain: But, whether the Jews had this Notion of the "Tranſmigration of Souls (as Joſephus, de Bell. lib. vii. cap. 25. and Philo, de Somniis, ſeem to tell us) it can hardly be thought, that what Herod here ſays, in regard to our Saviour, was ſpoken in Alluſion to it, becauſe it was not conceivable, how the Soul of John, lately dead, could enter into the Body of Chriſt, which for thirty Years and upwards, had been informed by another Soul. And therefore his Words muſt be underſtood, not of the Tranſition of the Baptiſt's Soul, but of his Reviviſcence, or returning to Life again. For, as it was an Opinion among the Jews, that, at the coming of the Meſſiah, ſome of their Prophets would riſe from the Dead: Herod had ſome Reaſon to ſuppoſe, that John, whom all the Jews held to be a Prophet, might be permitted to return into the World, and perhaps to avenge his Death upon the Tyrant.

The Evangeliſts make uſe of two Words upon the Occaſion of Chriſt's feeding the Multitude; Bleſſing, and giving of Thanks; and, by the former of theſe ſome Interpreters underſtand the

the multiplying Virtue, which he then commanded down upon the Subſtance, that he was going to give the People, and its marvellous Increaſe in the Hands of the Diſtributors, whereby it became a repaſt ſufficient for ſo large a Multitude: Though others think, that he did no more than what we call ſaying Grace, i. e. thanked God for his bountiful Proviſion of all Things, and begged his Bleſſing upon what he was going to diſpenſe among the People, that it might tend to the wholſome Nouriſhment of their Bodies. However this be, it is enough to warrant the indifferent Uſe of theſe two Words, that the Forms of Addreſs to Almighty God, upon the Uſe of his Gifts for a Refreſhment, have uſually been of a mixed Nature, and conſiſting partly of Praiſes and partly of Petitions, becauſe the End of ſuch Devotions is manifeſtly twofold, viz. to render Acknowledgements to God for his Liberality, and then to beg of him, that the good Creatures which he hath given us, may be ſanctified to our Uſe.

In this Miracle, which could not be done without a creating Power, our Lord not only ſhewed himſelf to "be God bleſſed for ever more," but took from the unbelieving Jews all Manner of Cavil, and Exception to his Works. For though Devils might, by Compact, give Place to one another, and ſome Exorciſts of their own might poſſibly caſt them out; yet none ever pretended to multiply Bread and Fiſh to ſuch a Proportion, that ſo ſmall a Quantity of either ſhould feed ſuch a Number, and then leave ſo great a Remainder.

It was a ſufficient Reaſon for our Saviour's ordering the Fragments to be gathered up, and put in Baſkets, that, from them might appear both the Reality of the Miracle, and the exceeding Greatneſs of the Increaſe; but becauſe our Lord aſſigns another by ſaying, "Gather up the Fragments, that nothing be loſt," he hath herein ſhewed us, that all Reſerving for the future is not unlawful: that Charity is very conſiſtent with Frugality; indeed, not only that they may, but that they ſhould, go together; for God will be ſure to make a mighty Difference between the Virtue, and the ſpecious Extream beyond it; between the liberal and laviſh Man.

St. Mark tells us, that our Saviour ordered his Apoſtles to croſs the Sea, and to wait for him on the other Side, at Bethſaida, chap. vi. 45. St. John writes, that accordingly they entered into the Ship, but, inſtead of going where they were directed, they ſteered their Courſe towards Capernaum, chap. vi. 17. and yet, after all, if we will believe St. Matthew, they landed at laſt, neither at Bethſaida nor Capernaum, but in the Country of Genneſaret, chap. xiv. 34. Now to reconcile this, we need only remember what all the Evangeliſts tell us, viz. that while the Apoſtles were on board, there aroſe a ſtrong Gale of Wind, which blowing from the North, proved in a Manner, quite contrary to them, ſo that inſtead of making the Port of Bethſaida, which is on the North Coaſt of the Sea of Galilee, the next Morning they found themſelves on the oppoſite Side, not

far from Tiberias, and to the South of Capernaum. Though therefore our Saviour ordered them to go to Bethſaida, yet they could not do it, becauſe the Wind was againſt them. Their next Attempt therefore was, to get to Capernaum, but even that they could not do; but being forced to yield to the Storm, were carried a good Way below to the South of it, from whence they juſt touched at Nazareth, and thence proceeded to Capernaum.

It was a common Opinion among the Jews, that Spirits did ſometimes appear cloathed in an human Form; but what put the Apoſtles at this Time in the greater Fright, was their imagining, that thoſe who appeared at Night, were uſually evil Spirits, and that this, which they now ſaw, might poſſibly be the Demon who had raiſed the Storm.

We may obſerve from ſeveral Parts of the Goſpel, particularly from Luke xiii. 23, 24. John xii. 34, 35. that it was uſual with our Bleſſed Saviour to anſwer nothing to ſuch curious Queſtions, as had no Tendency to Edification, but to divert the People from them, by propoſing ſome more profitable Subject.

Our Bleſſed Saviour, through the greateſt Part of St. John's Goſpel, takes an Occaſion, from the Multitudes coming after him out of a greedy Deſire to be fed, to diſcourſe to them of ſpiritual Bleſſings under the Metaphors of Meat and Drink; and for his Apology in ſo doing, we may obſerve, that, among the Oriental and Jewiſh Writers, no Metaphor was more common than this; that, to this Purpoſe, Solomon, in his Book of Proverbs, introduces Wiſdom crying in the Streets, "Come, eat of my Bread, and drink of my Wine, which I have mingled," Prov. ix. 5. for "they that eat me, ſhall yet be hungry, and they that drink me, ſhall yet be thirſty," ſays the wiſe Son of Sirach; "for the Soul (as Plato expreſſes it) is nouriſhed by receiving and practiſing good Things, and Wiſdom, Temperance, and Piety, are the Food of a Soul, that can ſuck them in." That, our Saviour calls himſelf "the Bread which came down from Heaven." Philo, upon the Words of Moſes deſcants, "What Food can God rain down from Heaven, but that heavenly Wiſdom which he ſends down upon the Soul, that deſires it?" That as he exhorts the People to labour for Meat, that periſhes not; Philo declares, that the Wiſdom of God is the Nurſe, and Nouriſher of thoſe, that deſire incorruptible Diet; and that, as he compares himſelf to the Manna, which fell in the Wilderneſs; "the good Man (ſays Philo again) lifts up his Eyes to Heaven, looking to the Manna, the divine and heavenly Work, the incorruptible Food of the Soul that loves God:" And from hence we may perceive, why our Saviour inſiſts ſo much upon this Metaphor, even becauſe it was familiar to the Jews, and uſed by their moſt celebrated Writers. But to proceed.

Whether our Bleſſed Saviour was at Jeruſalem, on the third Paſſover after his Baptiſm, the Evangeliſts have not informed us; but 'tis very probable that he who came to fulfil all Righteouſneſs,

ouſneſs, would not neglect ſo great an Ordinance. Upon this Preſumption, 'tis moſt generally believed that he was there, though very likely he might not ſtay long, but as ſoon as the Feſtival was over, return into Galilee, becauſe the Rulers at Jeruſalem, lay in wait for an Opportunity to put him to death.

Upon his Return into Galilee, a certain Number of Scribes and Phariſees were ſent from Jeruſalem, to be Spies upon his Actions, and to criticiſe upon his Doctrine. Theſe Men obſerving, that when he and his Diſciples were to eat, they ſat down without waſhing their Hands, contrary to the common Cuſtom of the Jews, which (as they pretended) was founded upon a Tradition, expoſtulated with him upon his Reaſon for ſo doing. To whom (inſtead of anſwering them directly) he put another Queſtion by way of recrimination viz. Why they, by their pretended Traditions, vacated the Laws of God, particularly, that ſo ſolemn one, of honouring their Parents, and relieving them in their Wants? And, thereupon looking upon them as ſo many Hypocrites, with whom he diſdained to hold any farther Converſe, he turned to the Multitude, and informed them, that true Piety did not conſiſt in outward Ceremonies, but in a ſincere Obſervance of the Laws of God; that no Pollution could be in what entered into a Man's Mouth, but only in what proceeded from it; for (as he afterwards explained the Thing to his Diſciples) "whatever we eat does not affect the Mind, the only Seat of Defilements, for it paſſes into the Stomach, and is ſeen thrown out of the Body, ſo that, be it never ſo groſs, or unclean, it cannot pollute the Eater: But all Pollution is from within, from the Corruption of the Heart, ſuch as impure Thoughts, unchaſte Deſires, unholy Purpoſes, immodeſt and indecent Speeches, &c. theſe are the Things that leave a laſting Stain upon the Soul, which a Thing, ſo merely external, as omitting to waſh before Meat, cannot do."

This was a Doctrine not well pleaſing to the Phariſees, as his Diſciples told him; but they were a Set of People, whoſe Cenſure he juſtly deſpiſed, blind Leaders of the Blind (as he properly enough calls them) whoſe vain Traditions, as having nothing of divine Inſtitution in them, his Purpoſe was to aboliſh. And from thence departing into the Coaſts of Tyre and Sidon, he entered into an Houſe, with a Deſign to conceal himſelf; but a certain Syrophœnician Woman, having got Intelligence of him, came and earneſtly requeſted of him to cure her Daughter, who was ſadly tormented with a Devil. Our Lord (for the Trial of her Faith) ſeemed at firſt to take no Notice of her, until his Diſciples (to get rid of her Importunity) deſired him to grant her Requeſt, and diſmiſs her. His Miniſtry, he told them, was confined to Judea, nor was he properly ſent to any, but the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of Iſrael. All this the poor Woman heard, but ſo far was ſhe from being diſcouraged by ſuch Coldneſs, that, advancing nearer, ſhe threw herſelf proſtrate at his Feet, imploring his Help for her Child; and when (in a

harſh Metaphor) he told her, that "it was not proper to work thoſe Miracles for an Heathen, which were originally deſigned for God's People, the Jews;" the afflicted Mother owned indeed the Truth of what he urged, but then (continuing the ſame Figure) ſhe humbly hoped, "that a poor diſtreſſed Heathen, might, in ſome ſmall Meaſure, partake of the Mercies which were more peculiarly promiſed to the Jews." Which Anſwer was ſo highly expreſſive of the Woman's Humility, Faith and Reliance, that he granted her Petition; ſo that, when ſhe returned home, ſhe found her Daughter laid upon the Bed and perfectly well.

The Sanhedrim, which ſat at Jeruſalem, and was the ſupreme Court in all religious Affairs, ſent Meſſengers to John the Baptiſt, when he began his Preaching, enquiring who he was, and by what Authority he baptized, John i. 19. and, as the Phariſees had charged our Saviour's Diſciples with a Violation of the Sabbath, in plucking and robbing the Ears of the Corn, and himſelf with the ſame Crime, in curing the Sick on the Sabbath-day, it is not improbable that theſe Accuſations had reached Jeruſalem, and that the Scribes and Phariſees, here mentioned, were Emiſſaries ſent from the Sanhedrim, to watch and obſerve our Saviour. And this ſeems the rather to be ſo, becauſe they were ſo very ready (when they could not find him guilty of any Violation of the Laws of God) to pick a Quarrel with him about ſome Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, which he and his Diſciples, thought not ſo very neceſſary to be obſerved.

The Traditions, in the Jewiſh Church, came to gain Credit upon this Preſumption, that Moſes, when he received the Law from God on Mount Sinai, which he recorded in his Five Books, was inſtructed, at the ſame Time, in ſeveral Things which God enjoined him not to commit to Writing, for fear leſt the Heathens ſhould tranſcribe them: That in theſe Things, Moſes inſtructed his Succeſſor Joſhua, and from Joſhua they were tranſmitted through the Elders of the People, by oral Conveyance only, until Ezra, after the Return of the Babyloniſh Captivity, collected them all together, and made the Cabbala, in ſeventy-two Books, which was kept by Gamaliel and others that ſucceeded, as Heads of the Sanhedrim, until the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem: That, about an hundred and twenty Years after this, R. Judas, the Son of Simon, compoſed a Book of them, called the Miſhna, i. e. the ſecond Law, which is indeed the moſt ancient Collection of Traditions that the Jews have: That three hundred Years after this, R. Jonathan, meeting with more, compiled them into a larger Volume; and an hundred Years after this, another Rabbi made a Collection of ſuch as were found among the Jews who remained in Babylon: That theſe two (which are a kind of Supplement and Explication of the Miſhna) are called, the one the Talmud of Jeruſalem, and the other, of Babylon; and that by them the Jews, at this Day are governed in Matters Eccleſiaſtical, all the World over. Nay, ſo extravagant is their Veneration for them,

them, that we find them preferring them before the written Law; for, that "the Words of the Scribes are more lovely than thoſe of the Law, and the Words of the Ancients of greater Weight than thoſe of the Prophets," are ſtanding Maxims among them, though ſavouring not a little of Blaſphemy. In Relation to the particular Cuſtom of waſhing before Meat, their Canon is, that "Whoſoever deſpiſeth the waſhing of Hands, is worthy to be excommunicated, he comes to Poverty, and will be extirpated out of the World:" For (according to the Senſe of one of their Doctors, viz. R. Aquiba) "he that takes Meat with unwaſhed Hands, is worthy of Death;" and therefore, when the ſame Doctor was in Priſon, and had not Water enough both to drink and waſh his Hands, he choſe to do the latter; becauſe, "It is better (ſays he) to die with Thirſt, than to tranſgreſs the Tradition of the Elders." It is no Wonder then, that Perſons inured to theſe Notions, ſhould ſo readily take Exception at our Saviour's omitting what were indeed (though they thought not ſo) Matters of an indifferent Nature.

The Way, whereby the Jews made the Law of honouring and ſubſiſting their Father and Mother of no Effect, was by pretending that whatever their Parents requeſted of them, was a Corban, i. e. that they had devoted it as a Gift or offering to God, or to his Temple; and, whatever was thus devoted, was not to be touched, be the Neceſſity never ſo urgent: For their Canon about Vows was, "That they reach even to Things commanded, and take Place, as well in Things required by the Law, as Things indifferent; that a Man may be ſo bound by them, that he cannot without great Sin, do what God had commanded to be done; and that in this Caſe, if he makes a Vow which cannot be performed without breaking a Commandment, his Vow muſt be ſatisfied, and the Commandment violated." This was a Superſtition which the Phariſees, and other Doctors of the Law, who had a Property in the Gifts and Oblations, that were made in the Temple, thought themſelves concerned to indulge; and therefore, when any pretended that their Parents ſtood in need of their Help, they told them, that if they did but acquaint them, that it was a Gift, that they have vowed ſuch a Portion of their Eſtate to ſacred Uſes, that would, before God, excuſe them from relieving their Parents. Nay they affirmed farther, that if a Man did but in a Paſſion, ſay, that the Thing, which another aſked of him, was a Corban, though it were not actually conſecrated to religious Uſes, this was Vow enough to prevent his relieving that other Perſon, even, putting the Caſe, that it were his own Father unleſs they ſhould abſolve him from it, which they would undertake to do for ſo many Shekels of Silver, Levit. xxvii. Such abundant Reaſon had our Bleſſed Saviour to charge the Jewiſh Doctors with making one of the greateſt Commands in the Second Table of the Law void by their Traditions concerning Vows.

In ſeveral Places of the Goſpel, our Lord

Lord calls the Phariſees, Hypocrites; not only becauſe they placed the Worſhip of God, and a great deal of Sanctity and Religion, in Ceremonies of human Inſtitution, and, though they pretended to extraordinary Purity, did all their good Works to be ſeen of Men, Matt. xxiii. 5. but more eſpecially in this Place; becauſe being ſuperſtitiouſly careful to avoid the outward Pollution of the Body by abſtaining from the Touch of any Thing, which they reputed unclean, and waſhing their Hands whenever they thought they had done ſo, they left that, which was within, viz. their Hearts and Affections, full of Iniquity, Uncleanneſs, Extortion, and Exceſs, Matt. xiii. 25. and Luke xi. 39. but, from Chriſt's Example in this Particular, we muſt not be forward to pronounce Men Hypocrites; becauſe we have neither that Authority, nor that Knowledge of their Hearts, which he had.

Tyre and Sidon were two conſiderable Cities, ſeated on the Mediterranean Sea; and the Country adjoining to them, which lay at the Weſt and North of Galilee, was called the Coaſts, or Territories of Tyre and Sidon. The old Inhabitants of this Tract were Deſcendants of Canaan (for Sidon was his eldeſt Son) and continued in Poſſeſſion of it much longer than they did of any other Part of the Country. The Greeks call it Phœnicia, and when by Right of Conqueſt, it became a Province of Syria, it took the Name of Syrophœnicia; and from hence the Woman, whom St. Matthew calls a Canaanite, is by St. Mark ſtiled a Syrophœnician, as being both by Religion and Language a Greek.

Let us now go on with our Hiſtory. From the Coaſts of Sidon, our Lord paſſed Eaſtward to Decapolis, and from thence towards the Sea of Galilee, where, in his Way, he cured a deaf and dumb Man, by putting his Fingers in his Ears, and ſome of his Spittle upon his Tongue; and thence repairing to a Mountain, he not only cured every Perſon that was brought unto him, whatever his Malady or Diſtemper was, but, in the Concluſion, fed all the Multitude, which amounted to four thouſand Men, beſides Women and Children (and who, for three Days ſucceſſively, had been attending him) with ſeven Loaves, and a few ſmall Fiſhes.

Having thus diſmiſſed the Company, he embarked with his Diſciples, for the Coaſt of Dalmanutha; but no ſooner was he arrived there, than the Phariſees, joining with their Enemies the Sadducees, came, and demanded of him a Sign from Heaven, in order to convince them, that he was the true Meſſiah: But, having firſt upbraided them with their Acuteneſs, in diſcerning the Face of the Sky, and from thence the Prognoſticks of fair or foul Weather, and their Blindneſs in not perceiving the manifeſt Signs of the Meſſiah's Coming, he remitted them (as he had done before) to the Miracle of his own Reſurrection, and ſo ſailed back with his Diſciples.

His Diſciples, in the Hurry of their Departure, had forgotten to take Bread with them; and therefore, when our Saviour,

Saviour, in their Paſſage, gave them Caution to take Care of the Leaven of the Phariſees and Sadducees, and they were ignorant enough to take his Word in a literal Senſe, he firſt gently reproved the Blindneſs of their Underſtandings, and the Shortneſs of their Memories, who had ſo ſoon forgotten his miraculous Multiplication of the Loaves and Fiſhes, at two different Times, and then gave them to underſtand, that his Words did not concern the Leaven of Bread, but the corrupt Doctrines of the Phariſees and Sadducees.

During this Diſcourſe they landed at Bethſaida, which though the Birth-place of ſeveral of the Apoſtles, had yet, by the Perverſeneſs and Infidelity of its Inhabitants, ſo offended him, that when a blind Man was preſented to him for Cure, he would not do it in the City, in the Sight of the Inhabitants; but, taking him out of the Gate, he anointed his Eyes with his Spittle, and laid his Hands on them. The Man, at firſt, ſaw Objects indiſtinctly, Men like Trees walking; but, when our Lord had laid his Hands upon his Eyes the ſecond Time, he reſtored him to his perfect Sight, and ſo ſent him home, with a Charge not to return into the City, nor to diſcover the Thing to any Perſon belonging to that Place.

From that Place he departed into the Coaſts of Cæſarea Philippi, where, being minded to make ſome Trial of his Apoſtles Faith and Proficiency, he demanded of them, What Opinion Mankind had of him, and whom they took him to be? Some (ſay they) take you to be John the Baptiſt riſen from the Dead; ſome Elias; ſent down from Heaven; and others Jeremias, or ſome other of the ancient Prophets, reſtored to Life again; but when he continued aſking what their Notion of him was, and Simon (in the Name of the reſt) had made an open Confeſſion, that he was Chriſt, "the Son of the Living God," he not only allowed that Confeſſion to be true, and what was confirmed by the Atteſtation of God himſelf, but, in Alluſion to the Name he had given him, which ſignifies a Rock or Stone, he told Simon, "That he would make him a Foundation-ſtone, or a prime Miniſter in building his Church, which ſhould be ſo firmly eſtabliſhed, that all the Power and Policy of its Enemies ſhould not be able at any Time to deſtroy it; and that, for the more orderly Government of it, he would give him the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, ſo that his Sentence, whenever it ſhould regularly exclude, or receive in any Perſon on Earth, ſhould be ratified and confirmed in Heaven." But then to prevent the ill Uſe that might be made of this Diſcovery, he ſtrictly charged his Apoſtles not to declare to any Man, that he was the Meſſiah.

Perceiving by this Diſcourſe with Peter, that his Diſciples had got a right Notion of his Office and Divinity, he began thenceforward to prepare their Minds for his Sufferings, and to talk more openly of his Death and Reſurrection. One Day therefore as he was inſiſting on the Sufferings which he was to undergo at Jeruſalem, and Peter,

ter, unable to endure a Thought ſo diſagreeable to the Dignity of his Maſter, deſired him to deſiſt, he gave him a very ſharp Rebuke, as a Perſon whoſe Advice croſſed his gracious Purpoſes of Man's Redemption, and ſavoured of nothing but worldly Grandeur; and therefore, to extinguiſh in them all Notions of a temporal Kingdom, he called his Diſciples, and told them, that, "Whoſoever pretended to profeſs his Religion, ſhould take up his Croſs, or patiently ſubmit to all manner of Perſecutions, in ſure and certain Hope of an happy Immortality, which he would procure for his Followers, when he was in his Kingdom, in which, ſome that were then preſent among them, ere it were long (but certainly before the Day of their Death) ſhould ſee him happily inſtated."

About eight Days after this, our Lord, to revive the Hearts of his Diſciples, as well as to inſtruct them more fully in the Nature of his Kingdom, thought it not improper to give ſome of them, at leaſt, a Specimen of his future Glory, and accordingly taking with him his three moſt intimate Apoſtles, Peter, James, and John, he aſcended an high Mountain, and there (while he was employed in Prayer) he was ſuddenly transformed into another Kind of Appearance; for a bright Luſtre darted from his Face, more glorious than the Sun; and a dazzling Splendor piercing from his Body thro' his Garments, made them appear whiter than Snow, and more radiant than the Light. During this heavenly Scene, there appeared Moſes and Elias, clothed with all the Brightneſs and Majeſty of a glorified State, familiarly converſing with him, and diſcourſing of his Death and Sufferings.

While this Intercourſe continued between theſe three, Peter and his two Fellow-Apoſtles were fallen aſleep, but, waking juſt before their Departure, they were exceedingly ſurpriſed, and terrified at the Sight of ſo much Glory and Majeſty. Peter indeed begged of his Maſter, that they might continue in that happy Place, "and erect three Tents, one for him, and the other two for Moſes and Elias:" But while he was thus talking, ſcarce knowing what he ſaid in his Fright and Tranſport, a bright and ſhining Cloud ſuddenly came over them, and a Voice from thence proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed, hear ye him." Upon which the Apoſtles were ſeized with a greater Conſternation than ever, and fell proſtrate upon the Ground; but upon our Lord's touching and encouraging them, they looked up, and ſaw none but him, for the other two were vaniſhed.

As they deſcended the Mount, he ſtrictly commanded them not to tell any Man what ſtrange Things they had ſeen, until he was riſen from the Dead. They were ready to obey his Commands, but did not rightly underſtand his laſt Words, and therefore they had ſome Altercations among themſelves concerning the Meaning of his riſing from the Dead: And another Difficulty they had to ſolve, for, having ſeen Elias with our Saviour upon the Mount, they could not forbear aſking

aſking him, What Reaſon the Scribes and Phariſees had for aſſerting, that that Prophet was to come upon the Earth before the Meſſiah? To which our Saviour replied, That theſe Jewiſh Doctors were not miſtaken in their Notion, becauſe Elias was in Effect come already, and had received the ſame bad Treatment from his Countrymen, that himſelf in a ſhort Time was to expect; from whence they perceived, that by the Elias he ſpoke of, he plainly intended John the Baptiſt.

We ſhall now conclude this Chapter in explaining the Difficulties that occur in this Period of our Hiſtory.

Decapolis is a Country in Paleſtine, which was ſo called becauſe it contained ten Cities, ſome ſituated on the Eaſt, and others on the weſt-ſide of the River Jordan, the firſt and pricipal City is Scythopolis, and the reſt (according to Pliny) are; 2d, Philadelphia; 3d, Raphanæ; 4th, Gadara; 5th, Hippos; 6th, Dion; 7th, Pella; 8th, Geraſa; 9th, Canatha; and 10th, Damaſcus; though others reckon them after another Manner, as Pliny himſelf obſerves.

Chriſt often made Uſe of viſible Signs, to repreſent that divine inviſible Virtue, which was inherent in him, and which, upon that Occaſion, he intended to exert: And therefore, becauſe deaf Perſons ſeem to have their Ears cloſed, he put his Fingers in the Man's Ears, to intimate, that, by his Power, he would open them; and, becauſe the Tongue of the Dumb ſeemed to be tied, or to cleave to the Palate, therefore he moiſtened it with Spittle, to ſignify that he would looſe and give free Motion to it. Theſe, it is true, were not capable to effect the Cure, but they had this Uſe in them, that they excited the Obſervation and Attention of the People, before whom theſe Cures were wrought.

What St. Matthew calls Magdala, St. Mark names Dalmanutha; and the Reaſon hereof is, becauſe theſe two Places lay very near together, and Dalmanutha very probably within the Precincts of Magdala.

The Leaven of the Phariſees was their Hypocriſy, and too ſcrupulous Obſervance of the Traditions of their Elders; and that of the Sadducees their Denial of the Exiſtence of Angels and Devils, the Reſurrection of the Body, and the Immortality of the Soul; ſo that the Meaning of our Saviour's Caution to his Apoſtles is, To avoid the Principles of thoſe, who place the Sum of their Religion in outward Performances, which avails nothing to the Sanctification of the Soul; and reject all ſuch Doctrines as tended to ſubvert Religion, by cutting off all Hopes of Happineſs in a future State.

The Reaſon of our Saviour's charging the Man whom he had cured of Blindneſs, that he ſhould not return to the City, is founded upon the Infidelity of the People of Bethſaida, wherein he upbraids them, Matth. xi. 21.

The City of Cæſarea Philippi is ſituated near the Head of the River Jordan, and was by the Canaanites

called Laiſh, or Lechem, Judg. xviii. 7. but being taken by ſome of the Danites, it was by them called Dan, and is generally reputed the utmoſt Border Northward of the Land of Iſrael. It was uſually called, by Heathen Writers, Paneas, from the adjoining Spring, Paneum, or Panion, which is commonly taken for the Fountain-head of Jordan. Auguſtus Cæſar gave it, and all the Territories belonging to it, to Herod the Great. He having rebuilt the Place, gave it and the Tecbarchy of Iturea and Trachonitis (which is adjoining) to his youngeſt Son Philip; who, when he had enlarged and beautified it, ſo as to make it the Capital of his Dominions, and chief Place of his Reſidence, gave it the Name of Cæſarea Philippi; partly to complement Tiberius Cæſar, who was then Emperor; partly to diſtinguiſh it from Cæſarea, mentioned in Acts x. 1. ſituated on the Mediteranean, and built by his Father in Honour of his great Benefactor Auguſtus Cæſar.

Thoſe, who held that Jeſus was John the Baptiſt riſen from the Dead, were of the ſame Opinion with Herod the Tetrarch, Matth. xiv. 2. and ſeem to have imbibed the Notion of the Phariſees; who (according to Joſephus) uſed to ſay, that "a good Man might eaſily return to Life again." Thoſe, who took him for Elias, ran into the general Opinion of the Notion, that Elias was to come before the Meſſiah, ſo long as his mean Appearance was contrary to their Expectations: And thoſe, who thought him to be Jeremias, ſeem to have eſpouſed the Sentiments of their Doctors, who looked upon that Prophet as the Head of the whole Order, not improbably upon the Character which God gives him, "Before I formed thee in the Belly I knew thee, and before thou waſt out of the Womb I ſanctified and I ordained thee, a Prophet to the Nations," Jer. i. 5.

That the reſt of the great Truth which St. Peter declares, viz. that Jeſus Chriſt was the Son of the living God, no one can doubt, who calls to Mind the Atteſtation made of it before by John the Baptiſt, John i. 34. the frequent Confeſſion of it by evil Spirits diſpoſſeſſed before their Eyes, Mark iii. 15. and that full Declaration of it in the whole Fraternity, "We believe, and are ſure, that thou art that Chriſt, the Son of the living God," John vi. 69. for which Reaſon we find the Fathers, upon this Occaſion, ſpeaking of St. Peter, as the Mouth, the Tongue, the Voice of the Church, and a Kind of Foreman to the reſt of the Apoſtles; for this they might think a Matter of Decency and good Manners, a Means to prevent Confuſion and Diſorder, and a Token of that Union and Harmony, which was among them, that one Man ſhould ſpeak for all the reſt. And why that one Man ſhould be St. Peter, rather than any of the reſt, may very well be imputed to the Seniority of his Age, the natural Fervour of his Temper, and his longer Attendance upon our Bleſſed Saviour, than ſeveral of the reſt had been employed in. Theſe are ſufficient Reaſons for his delivering the Judgment of the Company, and for our accounting

accounting his Confeſſion the common Voice of all to a Queſtion, which had evidently been propounded to them all.

Our Saviour's Anſwer in the Words in the Text are, "Fleſh and Blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in Heaven," Matth. xvi. 17. but how did God reveal this to St. Peter? Thoſe who pretend that he had a peculiar Revelation, not vouchſafed to any others, without which he could not have owned Chriſt to have been the Son of God, muſt not only allow the like Revelation to Nathaniel, John ii. 49. to the Centurion, who was preſent at our Lord's Crucifixion, Matth. xxvii. 64. and to all others, who made Declaration of the ſame Faith; but muſt likewiſe excuſe all thoſe Jews, who did not believe in Chriſt; becauſe it was not in their Power ſo to do without his peculiar Revelation. Without running ourſelves into thoſe Premunires therefore, we may reaſonably conclude, that the Senſe of our Saviour's Words is this,—"What others ſay of me, viz. that I am John, Elias, Jeremias, or the like, this thou haſt learnt from Men; but the Faith which thou haſt now confeſſed concerning me, though it required of thee a due Attention to the Proofs given of it, yet, ſince theſe Proofs are the Doctrine which I teach from God, and the Miracles done in Confirmation of it, are apparently the Finger of God, thy Faith muſt be acknowledged to be the Reſult, not of human Wiſdom, but of divine Revelation. God has given thee a teachable and intelligent Mind, to perceive, by my Doctrine and Miracles, that I am the true Meſſiah, notwithſtanding the Obſcurity of my Appearance; and therefore thou mayeſt be truly ſaid to be taught of God, becauſe my Doctrine is the Word, and my Miracles are the Power of God."

Peter was ſo called, either becauſe his being the Apoſtle of the Jews, to whom the Goſpel was firſt tendered, might make him in ſome Senſe, one of the firſt Foundations of the Chriſtian Church, Eph. ii. 20. or becauſe the Firmneſs and Reſolution, wherewith he ſupported the Chriſtian Cauſe, even to the Day of his Martyrdom, was very eminent and remarkable.

It is very evident, that, whereas the Word Church is capable of two Senſes, and taken, in common Speech, ſometimes for a Society of Perſons worſhipping God, and ſometimes for a Place ſet apart for the publick Performance of ſuch Worſhip; our Saviour intends it here in the latter of theſe Senſes, and that the Building of this Church (which is a Metaphor of frequent Uſe in the New Teſtament) ſignifies the doing of thoſe Things, either in private Chriſtians, or publick Communities of them, which may contribute to their Growth in Grace and Goodneſs, their mutual Strength and Support, their Perfection and Continuance; and accordingly Chriſtians thus united together, are called a ſpiritual Houſe, 1 Pet. ii. 5. "an heavenly Building, fitly framed together, and an Habitation of God thro' the Spirit," Eph. ii. 21, 22.

The Words in the Text are,—— "The Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail

againſt it," Matt. xvi. 18. Some Interpreters mean by the Word Hades, which we tranſlate Hell, the State or Place of the Dead; and by the "Gates of Hades, the Power of Death;" and ſo the Words, applied to the Members of Chriſt's myſtical Body, or to particular Chriſtians, will mean, "That though at preſent Death has the Dominion over them, yet ſhall not his Conqueſt of thoſe that die in the Lord, be abſolute and final. They ſhall revive a ſecond Time to a better Life, and triumph over this laſt great Enemy of Mankind." Others by Hell underſtand the Place of infernal Torments; and ſo, by an eaſy Figure, apply it to the Devil and his Angels, inhabiting thoſe Regions of Darkneſs; but then becauſe the Gates of Cities are not only, in all Countries, Places of Strength, but among the Jews more eſpecially, were Places of Judicature, and where Magiſtrates met to conſult for the Security of the Publick; it hence comes to paſs, that by "the Gates of Hell" they mean the Strength and Policy of the Wicked, and ſo make the Senſe of our Saviour's Promiſe to be this, — — That notwithſtanding all the wicked Contrivances of Satan and his Inſtruments, to deſtroy the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity in the World, yet all their Power and Policy ſhould not be able to affect it. Chriſt's holy Religion ſhould ſtand and flouriſh, in deſpite of their wicked Contrivances; and, however a Defection might happen in ſome particular Places, to the End of the World he ſhould never want a Society of Men, confeſſing, with St. Peter, that "Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of the living God," Matth. xvi. 16.

In ſeveral Parts of this Goſpel we find our Saviour enjoining the People, whom he had cured, not to make any Publication of his Miracles, Matt. viii. 4. and ix. 30. but it is an Injunction of a particular Nature, not to diſcover that he was the Chriſt, though this was an Article neceſſary for every Man to know and believe, in Order to his Salvation. Now, this was a Point neceſſary for all to know, yet the Apoſtles were not the proper Perſons, at this Time, to declare it; becauſe it might look like a Kind of Confederacy between them, if they ſhould prove too laviſh in the Commendations of their Maſter. It would much better become his infinite Wiſdom therefore, to find out himſelf a proper Opportunity for the Diſcovery of this great Truth, which could not be preached out of Seaſon, without drawing the Envy of the Phariſees upon him, and obſtructing the Progreſs of the Goſpel; which could hardly be believed, conſidering the low Circumſtances wherein he appeared, and which had it been believed, might have encouraged the Attempt of the Jews to come and make him a King, John vi. 15. What therefore our Saviour ſays to his Three Apoſtles, in Relation to his Transfiguration, that they ſhould tell no Man of it, until he was riſen from the Dead, Matth. xvii. 9. is applicable to this Paſſage likewiſe.

For, after his Reſurrection, they were by Office to be his Witneſſes, and to declare to others that he was the Chriſt; becauſe they could then do it, not only without Suſpicion of Confederacy, but with great Advantages and Succeſs, after

after that Chriſt had taken Poſſeſſion of his Kingdom; and had teſtified this by ſitting down at the Right-hand of Power, and by ſending down upon them the Holy Ghoſt, to enable them to confirm their Teſtimony.

Peter's Words in the Greek tranſlated, "Be it far from thee, Lord," we may render, "Be merciful to thyſelf, Spare thyſelf." "Since the Rulers at Jeruſalem have ſuch malevolent Deſigns againſt thee, why ſhouldſt thou think of going any more among them? If they intend to evil intreat thee, and take away thy Life, be thou kind and favourable to thyſelf, avoid the Danger by keeping at a Diſtance from it, conſult thine own Preſervation by continuing here." This ſeems to be the proper Senſe of St. Peter's Words, and they were doubtleſs ſpoken with a good Intention, and ſingular Affection for his Maſter, but ſtill they argued great Weakneſs in him, in pretending to contradict one, whom he had juſt before acknowledged to be the Chriſt, the Son of God, and denote him ignorant of the Redemption of Mankind by that Death, which God in his wiſe Counſel had determined.

The Words of our Bleſſed Saviour upon this Occaſion are, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence to me," Matth. xvi. 23. Not that we are to think that our Saviour ever imagined, that St. Peter had any pernicious Deſigns againſt him, as the great Enemy of Mankind has, when he tempts and deludes them into Sin; but his Meaning is, that his Interpoſition in this Affair was very unſeaſonable, and highly repugnant to his Deſign of coming into the World, which was to ſave it. "Thou thinkeſt perhaps (ſays he) Peter, that in thy Advice thou ſheweſt thy Kindneſs to me, as a Friend, that reſpects my Welfare, and is tender of my Preſervation; but inſtead of that, thou art an Adverſary to me (for ſo the Word Satan ſignifies, Numb. xxii. 32. 2 Sam. xix. 23. 1 Kings v. 4.) in thy endeavouring to draw me aſide from doing what is my Father's Will and Command, John x. 18. I told thee that I muſt ſuffer; that ſuch is the determinate Counſel of God, and ſuch my fixed Purpoſe and Reſolution; and therefore all Advice to the contrary is what I cannot away with; it is an Offence to me; it is an Abomination." So dear was the Salvation of Mankind to Jeſus Chriſt, that he could not hear even one of the Chief of his Apoſtles diſſuading him from it, without ſome Emotions of Anger and Indignation.

Among ſeveral Nations it was a Cuſtom for the Criminal to bear the Croſs, whereon he was to ſuffer, to the Place of Execution; and, in Alluſion to this, our Saviour makes Uſe of this Phraſe to denote our chearfully bearing thoſe Trials and Perſecutions, which the divine Providence brings upon us in the Execution of our Duty, and our Adherence to his moſt holy Religion.

Our Saviour's Words,—"Verily I ſay unto you, there are ſome of them who are ſtanding here, who ſhall not taſte of Death, till they ſee the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom," Matth. xvi. 28. ſome Interpreters, both antient and modern, underſtand of our Lord's Transfiguration

Transfiguration on the Mount; in which there was ſome Glimpſe of the Glory of his Father, and the Attendance of Angels; but, beſides that this happened too ſoon (no more than ſix Days) after theſe Words were ſpoken to need the Expreſſion of ſome of them not ſeeing Death until it came to paſs, which muſt at leaſt denote ſome Diſtance of Time, 'tis very plain, that at this wonderful Sight, none of the three Apoſtles could behold Chriſt coming in his Judgment, becauſe his Kingdom did not commence till after his Reſurrection, when all Power both in Heaven and Earth was given him, Matth. xviii. 18. Others imagine that the Paſſage relates to the great Day of Judgment, becauſe 'tis ſaid, that Chriſt will reward every Man according to his Work, ver. 27. But then, on the other Hand, it may be alledged, that there was none in the Company then ſtanding there, who was not to die, or taſte of Death (which is the Jewiſh Phraſe) long before the Coming of that great and terrible Day of the Lord: And therefore others have concluded, that this Coming of Chriſt in his Kingdom, relates to another Event, viz. the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh Church and Nation, wherein our Lord may properly enough be ſaid to come in the Glory of his Father, and with his Angels, to puniſh the Jews, in deſtroying them; and reward the Chriſtians, in preſerving them; according to their Works. This happened above forty Years after our Saviour's Death, when ſome in the Company (as particularly John the Evangeliſt actually was) might be alive, and Witneſſes of the Accompliſhments of our Lord's Menaces againſt that devoted City and Nation. This is the popular Interpretation at preſent, but I cannot ſee, why the other Parts of our Saviour's Exaltation may not be taken into the Account; for, as he began to enter upon his Kingdom by his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion into Heaven, ſo his ſending the Holy Ghoſt among the Apoſtles and the terrible Judgment which he brought upon the Jewiſh Nation, may well be looked upon as the Effects and Conſequences of his glorious Reign.

What St. Luke calls about eight Days, Chap. ix. 29. St. Matthew and St. Mark make after ſix Days: But the Reaſon of this ſeeming Diſagreement is, that the two laſt Evangeliſts compute only the intire Days between our Saviour's Diſcourſe, and his going up into the Mount, and therefore ſtile them ſix; whereas St. Luke, including both the Days of his Diſcourſe, and his Aſcent, calls them eight Days. And this is evident from the Word about; which when any Number is mentioned, is always added to ſignify, that it is not exact, but wants ſomething to make it compleat, as may be ſeen in Matt. xiv. 21. Luke i. 56. iii. 23. xxiii. 44. John iv. 6. xix. 14. Acts ii. 41, &c.

That the Mountain on which our Saviour was transfigured, was Mount Tabor (which ſtood in the Midſt of the Lower Galilee, at an equal Diſtance between the Mediterranean and the Sea of Tiberias) is a Matter confirmed by the Voice of all Antiquity, but ſome modern Writers are of a different Opinion

nion; becauſe Tabor (ſay they) does not ſtand in the Way between Cæſarea Phillipi and Capernaum; and that our Saviour travelled from Mount Cæſarea to this Mount (which is almoſt thro' the whole Length of Galilee) is a little too much to ſuppoſe. Lightfoot in Mark ix. But this he had Space enough to do in the ſix intervening Days between his Diſcourſe and his Transfiguration; and that he really did ſo, is made very probable, both from St. Matthew and St. Mark, who ſeem to intimate, that after he had finiſhed his Diſcourſe with his Diſciples, he entered immediately upon his Journey; and accordingly we hear nothing more of him, until the Expiration of ſix whole Days, Matt. xvii. 1. Luke ix. 2. but, after his Return from the Mount, and Cure of the Demoniac, that was brought before him, 'tis ſaid, that he and his Diſciples departed thence, and paſſed through Galilee, i. e. the remaining Part of Galilee, to come to Capernaum, Luke iii. 30, 33.

The Doctrine of the general Reſurrection they could not but underſtand, for that the Phariſees believed, Acts xxiv 15. and of that Martha makes Acknowledgement, John xi. 24. nor could they be ignorant of the Meaning of any particular Man's riſing from the Dead, for of that they had Inſtances in the Old Teſtament, and had lately ſeen an Example of it at the Gates of Nain, Luke vii. 15. but being taught out of their Law, that Chriſt was to abide for ever, John xii. 54. and that of his Kingdom there ſhould be no End, Luke i. 33. they could not tell how to reconcile his Death to the Prediction of the Prophets, and their own Conceptions of his temporal Kingdom, and therefore we may obſerve, that when Chriſt was dead, their Hopes died with him, We truſted, that it had been he who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael, Luke xxiv. 21. but that, at his Reſurrection they revived again, which made them aſk, Wilt thou, at this Time, reſtore the Kingdom to Iſrael? Acts i. 6.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

From our Lord's Transfiguration to his laſt Entry into Jeruſalem.

THE Day following our Lord's Transfiguration (for that Tranſaction was, very probably, in the Night-Time) as he came down from the Mount, he perceived the Scribes in deep Debate with the Apoſtles he had left behind him; and while he was enquiring into the Subject of their Diſpute, a certain Man breaking through the Croud fell proſtrate at his Feet, and beſought him to have Pity upon his only Son, a deplorable Object, a Lunatick, and poſſeſſed, deaf and dumb, often thrown upon the Ground, and into the Fire and Water, racked with violent Convulſions, accompanied with diſmal Outcries, Foamings, Bruiſes and Torments, and every Way in ſo deſperate a Condition, that his Diſciples, in his Abſence, were not able to cure him. Our Lord, upon hearing of this, was not a little grieved at the Want of Faith in his Diſciples, but ordered the Child to be brought to him. As he was drawing near, the Devil began to rack him with Convulſions, which put his Father in a terrible Fright; when our Lord commanded the evil Spirit to depart out of the young Man, and never to moleſt him more. After ſome hideous Outcries, he tore and diſtorted him to ſuch a Degree, that he left him breathleſs on the Ground, ſo that many concluded he was quite dead. But Jeſus taking him by the Hand, lifted him up, and delivered him to his Father perfectly cured, to the great Aſtoniſhment of all the Spectators: And when his Diſciples in private deſired to know the Reaſon why they could not caſt out this Spirit, he imputed it, partly to their Want of Faith, and partly to this Spirit's being of a Kind which was not to be ejected without Faſting and Prayer.

Before we proceed, let us attend to the following Remarks on the foregoing Paſſages.

The Evangeliſt acquaints us, that while our Saviour was at Prayer on the Mount, "St. Peter and they that were with him, were heavy with Sleep," Luke ix. 32. which, in ſome Meaſure confirms the Conjecture, that the Transfiguration was in the Night; a Time much more proper for the Diſplay

play of the Luſtre of ſuch an Appearance, than if it had happened in the broad Day-light.

What the Subject-matter of the Debate was, between the Scribes and his Diſciples, the Evangeliſts have not informed us; but it ſeems not unlikely, that the Scribes were diſputing with the Apoſtles, about their Maſter's ejecting Devils, and the Power, which in that Matter he had conferred upon them, becauſe in the Caſe before them, they ſaw them nonpluſſed, and not able to caſt a Devil out of one, who, in his Abſence was brought to them. This is the rather probable, not only becauſe our Saviour's diſpoſſeſſing Devils was what gravelled and vexed the Scribes and Phariſees more than all his other Miracles, and forced them to the ſorry Refuge of, "He caſts out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils;" but becauſe upon his coming to the timely Relief of his Apoſtles, he demanded of the Scribes, what they were queſtioning and diſputing about, it immediately follows, "One of the Multitude anſwered and ſaid, Maſter, I have brought unto thee my Son, which hath a dumb Spirit,—And I ſpake to thy Diſciples, that they ſhould caſt him out, and they could not, Mark ix. 17, 18.

The Greek Word tranſlated Lunatick, coming from a Word that ſignifies the Moon, anſwers exactly to the Engliſh Lunatick, from Luna; but there is a Miſtake in rendering it. For, whereas the Engliſh Word Lunatick is commonly taken for a Madman; ſuch a one eſpecially, whoſe Diſtemper grows worſe towards the Full of the Moon; it is plain from all Symptoms, ſuch as being convulſed, foaming at the Mouth, and bruiſing and tearing himſelf, &c. that the Diſorder under which this Perſon laboured, was an Epilepſy, or the Falling-ſickneſs. Now the Reaſon why this Diſeaſe is expreſſed by the Word Lunatick, is becauſe the Moon hath the ſame Influence on it, that it has in Madneſs. Both Diſtempers lie in the Brain, and the Changes of the Moon affect thoſe that are ſubject to the one, as well as the other. When therefore the Evangeliſts tell us of this Epileptick, that the Devil took him, that he threw him down, caſt him into a Fit, and made him tear and bruiſe himſelf; the Meaning of all this is, that as, in thoſe Days, it was a common Thing for the Devil to have Power over Men's Bodies, which Power he employed in bringing Diſeaſes upon them: So it was in the preſent Caſe. The Devil that poſſeſſed this young Man, caſt him into frequent Fits of the Falling-ſickneſs (as all Demoniacks, we find, have one Diſtemper or other attending them) of which there was no Way to cure him, but by caſting out the Devil.

The Rebuke which our Saviour utters upon this Occaſion, "O faithleſs and perverſe Generation, how long ſhall I be with you? &c." Matt. xvii. 17. ſeems to be intended for the whole Company, and every one to have a Share in it, in Proportion to their Deſerts. The Diſciples are not exempted, for they are charged with Infidelity. The Father of the Patient is pointed at, for his Faith was wavering, Mark

xi. 21, &c. And the whole Nation of the Character of old, "A very froward and perverſe Generation, in whom is no Faith," Deut. xxiii. 5, 20.

Joſephus, who himſelf was a Phariſee, and well acquainted with the Notions of every Sect among the Jews, gives it for a current Opinion, that the Demons, in his and ſome preceding Ages, were nothing elſe but the Souls of wicked Men, who after Death, took Poſſeſſion of the Living; and were continually either afflicting and tormenting, or exciting and ſolliciting them to ſuch Sins as they found were agreeable and complexional to them; and that, according to their different Ways of vexing or tempting thoſe that they poſſeſſed, they had different Appellations given them, an unclean Spirit, a deaf and dumb Spirit, a Spirit of Infirmity, &c. In Conformity to this Notion, perhaps it is, that our Saviour here takes Notice of the different Kinds of evil Spirits, and, as among wicked Men, there are different Degrees of Impiety, and ſome are more hardened and profligate than others; ſo he ſeems to intimate, that ſome of theſe Spirits are more deſperate and malicious than others, Matt. xii. 45. But all of them obſtinate enough (might they have their own Option) unwillingly to leave the Bodies they have taken Poſſeſſion of. Hence they think themſelves ſafe, and, in ſome meaſure, ſcreened from the divine Vengeance; and therefore we find them, at ſometimes crying to our Lord, "Let us alone, what have we to do with thee? Art thou come to torment us," Matt. viii. 29. And others, when commanded to depart, tearing and torturing the Poſſeſſed, and quitting their Habitation, not without much Reluctancy, Mark ix. 26. The Apoſtles, no doubt, had adjured this evil Spirit before, in their Maſter's Name, and on ſeveral Occaſions had found the prevailing Power of it, even when their Faith was not ſo well improved, as it was at preſent: And yet, how Faith becomes neceſſary in the Exorciſm of Devils, when we find Strangers doing that in the Name of Chriſt, Mark ix. 38. or how the Faith of the Apoſtles came to be defective now, when not many Days before it was ſo very effectual, Mark vi. 13. why ſome evil Spirits were Proof againſt the Name of Chriſt, whilſt others fled at the bare Mention of it; and why ſome ſurrendered at the firſt Summons, while Faſting and Prayer was the only Artillery that could diſlodge others? Theſe, and many more Queſtions that might be raiſed from our Saviour's Words, are Points wherein the beſt Commentators, we have met with, have not once attempted to give us any Satisfaction.

But to go on. From the Mount of Transfiguration, our Lord proceeded in his Journey through the other Parts of Galilee towards Capernaum, and as he was on his Way, he acquainted his Diſciples, the ſecond Time, with his approaching Death and Reſurrection, deſiring them to take good Notice of what he told them; but the Hopes of a temporal Kingdom had ſo intoxicated their Minds, that they found it very difficult to believe or conceive

conceive what he ſaid, and yet they were afraid to aſk him to explain it.

The Words in the Text are, "They underſtood not this Saying, and it was hid from them," Luke ix. 45. They underſtood our Saviour's Words, no doubt, and what was the Import of his being delivered into the Hands of Men, and put to Death; but then they could not comprehend how their Maſter, whom they knew to be the Meſſiah, the Son of God, and whom, conſequently, they believed to be immortal and eternal, could poſſibly be put to Death, or ſuffer the Affronts and Outrages of Men. Theſe Notions to them ſeemed incompatible; and therein they conceived a Myſtery which they could not underſtand: But the modern Jews have endeavoured to reconcile theſe two Notions, by inventing the Diſtinction of the Meſſiah Ben Joſeph, who was to die, and the Meſſiah Ben David, who was to triumph and live for ever.

In the ſame Journey there aroſe a Diſpute among the Apoſtles, which of them ſhould have the chief Place of Dignity in their Maſter's Kingdom; ſtill dreaming of a temporal Sovereignty. This our Saviour by his divine Spirit knew; and therefore, to give an effectual Check to their ambitious Thoughts, he firſt informed them, that the only Way for any Man to become great in his Kingdom, was to be lowly in his own Eſteem; and then calling a little Child, and ſetting him in the Midſt of them, he propoſed him as a Pattern of Meekneſs and Humility, recommended ſuch Children, and in them all humble Chriſtians, to the Favour of Mankind; cautioned them againſt doing any Injury, or giving any Offence to ſuch, becauſe of their Guardian Angels; and, to remove the Occaſion of all ſuch Offences, exhorted them to mortify their inordinate Affections, though they were to them as an Eye, an Hand, or a Foot, becauſe his heavenly Father (like a diligent Shepherd, that delights in the Recovery of a ſtray Sheep) was unwilling that any Believer ſhould periſh. Together with theſe Reaſons againſt Scandal and Offences, he preſcribed ſome excellent Rules in Relation to brotherly Reproof, and for the Enforcement of this laſt Duty, he propounded the Parable of a certain King, who calling his Servants to Account, found that one of them owed him an immenſe Sum, no leſs than ten thouſand Talents, which, upon his Inſolvency, and humble Petition, he freely forgave; and yet this very Wretch was no ſooner out of the King's Preſence, than he ſeized upon his Fellow-ſervant for a Trifle of a Debt, a Debt of a hundred Pence only, and caſt him into Priſon, even though he had uſed the ſame pathetick Intreaties to him, that himſelf had done to the King his Maſter: Which when the King underſtood, he ſent for the ungrateful Villain, upbraided him with his Baſeneſs and Cruelty, and then, in great Rage, ordered him to Priſon, until he ſhould diſcharge the whole Debt. "And ſo likewiſe ſhall my heavenly Father (ſays our Lord in the Application) deal with ſuch as will

not forgive their Brother's Treſpaſſes from their Hearts."

While he was giving theſe Inſtructions to his Diſciples, he was interrupted by John, the Son of Zebedee, informing him of a Stranger who caſt out Devils in his Name; but becauſe he was not of their Fraternity, that he had forbidden him; which Conduct Jeſus by no Means could approve of, becauſe he looked upon it, as a ſure Argument, that whoever did Miracles in his Name, could be no Enemy to his Perſon.

With this Diſcourſe they arrived at Capernaum, where the Collectors of a certain Tribute for the Uſe of the Temple, came to Peter, and aſked him, if his Maſter was accuſtomed to pay it? And when Peter went in to acquaint him with the Officer's Demands, "Of whom, (ſays our Lord preventing him) do the Kings of the Gentiles take Tribute? Of their own Children, or of Strangers?" Peter anſwered, "Of Strangers:" "If ſo, (rejoined our Saviour) then are the Children free;" meaning, that ſince the Gentile Kings did not exact Tribute, of their own Houſhold, this Tribute, which was paid to God for his Temple, was not due from him, who was his Son, nor from them who were his Domeſticks; however, to avoid all Occaſions of Offence, he ordered him to go and caſt an Hook into the Sea, and in the Mouth of the firſt Fiſh that he caught, he ſhould find a Piece of Money, juſt of proper Value to give to the Collectors for them: which accordingly came to paſs.

Here let us ſtop to make ſome Remarks on what we have been relating.

There is ſome ſmall Difference in the ſeveral Ways, among the Apoſtles concerning their Preference in Chriſt's Kingdom; St. Matthew tells us, that "the Diſciples came to Jeſus, ſaying, who is greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven?" chap. xviii. 1. St. Mark, that Chriſt put this Queſtion to them, and they held their Peace, chap. ix. 33. and St. Luke, that they had been diſputing this Point among themſelves, and Jeſus, perceiving the Thoughts of their Hearts, took a Child, &c. ch. ix. 46, 47. Now, to reconcile this ſeeming Repugnancy, we muſt obſerve, that as our Saviour was going to Capernaum, his Diſciples following him, diſcourſing among themſelves (as St. Mark has it) who of them was to be the greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven; that when they came to him into the Houſe, having ſtill the ſame ambitious Notions in their Minds, he aſked them, What was it that you diſcourſed of in the Way? But they being aſhamed to tell him held their Peace; and that then our Saviour, who well underſtood what the Subject of their Diſcourſe had been, endeavoured, by the Example of a Child, to cure their Diſtemper, and to inform them what Diſpoſition of Mind was proper to qualify them both for his Kingdom of Grace here, and his Kingdom of Glory hereafter. St. Matthew, indeed, according to our Tranſlation, repreſents the Thing, as if the Diſciples had put the Queſtion to their Maſter, Who ſhould be greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven; but that the Participle perceiving relates not to Jeſus,

Jeſus, but the Diſciples, and means not the external Speech but the inward Reaſoning of their Minds, is obvious from their Silence, which St. Mark takes Notice of, and our Saviour's perceiving the Thoughts of their Hearts, which St. Luke remarks: For had themſelves propounded the Queſtion to our Saviour (as the Verſion in St. Matthew ſeems to imply) we cannot ſee why they ſhould not anſwer his Demand, which tended to the ſame Purpoſe; nor can we imagine, why he ſhould be repreſented, as perceiving the Thoughts of their Hearts, had they already declared theſe Thoughts in plain Words.

The Apoſtles, as well as other Jews, had imbibed the Notion (which they never got quit of, until the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt inſtructed them better) that the Meſſiah when he came upon Earth, ſhould erect a temporal Kingdom; and (as the Jews in general expect) that they then ſhould be conſtituted Lords over all other Nations; ſo the Apoſtles (who believed their Maſter to be the Meſſiah) were naturally led to think, that they ſhould have the Preference before all other Jews; and that ſince the King Meſſiah according to the Cuſtom of other Sovereigns was to have ſome Officers of the higheſt Rank, they made no Queſtion but that ſome of them ſhould be made Choice of, though they were not ſo well agreed, who were the fitteſt or moſt deſerving of theſe high Poſts of Honour. Some of them were our Lord's Relations, and others had Parts and Endowments extraordinary; of ſome he had given high Commendations, and others he had admitted to a Participation in his moſt ſecret Retirements. Theſe Things might poſſibly raiſe ſome Emulation among them; and therefore, as our Saviour's Dominion was not of this World, he plainly tells them, that all ſuch worldly Deſires and Expectations, were inconſiſtent with the ſpiritual Kingdom which he was to erect, and wherein, "he who deſired to be firſt, was to be laſt of all, and Servant of all."

Some of the Antients are of Opinion, that the Child which Chriſt ſet before his Diſciples, as a Pattern of Meekneſs and Humility, was St. Ignatius, who was afterwards Biſhop of Antioch, and famous in the Chriſtian Church, for his writing and dying in the Defence of the Truth. However this be, it is certain that a Child, who has no Concern for Dominion or Empire over others, who is free from all covetous Deſires of Wealth, and knows nothing of what a Poſt of Honour means, was in this Caſe a very proper Emblem of that Simplicity, Innocence and Humility, that our Lord requires in all his Diſciples.

The Words in the Caution are, "Whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little Ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a Millſtone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Sea," Matt. xviii. 6. To offend or ſcandalize, is to diſcourage Men in the Profeſſion and Practice of Religion, and by Indignities and Perſecutions, as well as by bad Example, to occaſion their apoſtatizing

poſtatizing from the Faith: For we can hardly imagine that ſo ſevere a Puniſhment, as is here threatened, ſhould be inflicted for a Crime of leſs Aggravation than it amounts to: Grotius, upon this Place, is of Opinion, that the Millſtone about the Neck, alludes to a Cuſtom of drowning among the Syrians. But St. Jerome thinks, that this Manner of Execution was in Uſe among the Jews; for (according to Dr. Alix) it was cuſtomary for them to caſt execrable Men into the Dead Sea, with a Stone tied to them. 'Tis certain from Diodorus Siculus, and others, that among the Greeks, this was the antient Puniſhment for ſacriligious Perſons; and from Suetonius we may learn, that for the Pride and Covetouſneſs, wherewith ſome in publick Offices had oppreſſed the Provinces where they lived, Auguſtus had them caſt into the River, with great Weights about their Necks.

With Reſpect to Guardian Angels, who were ſuppoſed to attend on true Chriſtians, it were too nice, perhaps, to ſay that every diſtinct Man has his diſtinct Guardian Angel: It may be true, ſometimes, that many have but one, and it may be true at other Times, that one has many, as we find Jacob had at Mahanaim, and Elias at Dothan; but this we may ſafely affirm, that no good Man is without an Angel to inſpect his Behaviour, and to ſollicit his Well-being. To this Purpoſe Abraham tells his Servant, traveling to Nahor, "the Lord will ſend his Angel with thee, and proſper thy Way," Gen. xxiv. 40. and Jacob makes Mention of one who had redeemed him from all Evil, and wiſhes the ſame Protection to his Children, Gen. xlviii. 16. The Pſalmiſt gives us expreſs Teſtimony, that the "Angel of the Lord ſtandeth round about thoſe that fear him," Pſal. xxxiv. 7. and that Paſſage, which the Devil applies to our Saviour, "he ſhall give his Angels Charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy Ways," is delivered by the Pſalmiſt as true of every Servant of Chriſt, as well as of Chriſt himſelf, "for they are all miniſtering Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them, who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation."

The ten thouſand Talents mentioned in the Parable of the King's calling his Servants to Account, in our Money, amount to one million eight hundred and ſeventy-five thouſand Pounds; whereas the hundred Pence, that his Fellow-ſervant was indebted to him, was about three Pounds, two Shillings and Six-pence.

The doctrinal Obſervation, that properly reſults from the Puniſhment of the ungrateful Debtor, mentioned in the ſame Place, is this, That our Sins once forgiven, may, by a Forfeiture of that Pardon by our future Miſbehaviour, be again charged upon us; for God's Pardons in this Life are not abſolute, but conditional only: According to the Petition of our Lord's Prayer, they are anſwerable to our Dealings with others; and are likely to be no longer continued to us than we perform the Condition.

That the Man who, as St. John informed Chriſt, caſt out Devils in his Name, though he was not of their Number,

Number, did truly caſt them out, our Lord's Anſwer ſuppoſes, and his Diſciples ſaw with their Eyes; but then the Queſtion is, How a Perſon, who did not follow Chriſt, could caſt out Devils in his Name? To which it may be anſwered, 1ſt; That this Perſon might believe in Jeſus, without being one of his Retinue, and follow his Doctrine, tho' he did not his Perſon. 2dly, He might do Miracles in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, without being one of his true Diſciples, even as Judas is ſuppoſed to have done, and thoſe others, to whom our Lord will profeſs, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity," Matth vii. 23. Or, 3dly, He might be a Diſciple of John the Baptiſt, and ſo do his Miracles in the Name of Chriſt ſhortly to come. But by what Means ſoever it was, that he did them, 'tis no ſmall Confirmation of the Truth of Chriſtianity, that our Saviour's Name was thus powerful, even among thoſe that did not follow him, and therefore were incapable of doing any Thing by way of Compact with him.

With Reſpect to the Tribute collected for the Uſe of the Temple, every Jew, that was twenty Years old, was obliged to pay annually two Attick Drams or half a Shekel (about fifteen Pence of our Money) for the Uſe of the Sanctuary, Exod. xxx. 13, 16. or to buy Sacrifices, and other Things neceſſary for the Service of the Temple: And that this was the Tribute which the Collectors here demanded, and not any Tax payable to the Roman Emperors (as ſome imagine) is evident, not only from our Saviour's Argument' viz. That he was the Son of the heavenly King, to whom it was paid, and conſequently had a Right to plead his Exemption; but from the Greek Word Didrachma, which (according to Joſephus) was the proper Word for this Capitation Tax, that was paid to the Temple at Jeruſalem; whereas the Cæſarean Tribute-money was the Denarius, a Roman Coin, and would have been gathered by the uſual Officers, and Publicans, and not by the Perſons, who are here ſtiled (as by a known Title) they that received the Didrachma.

The Piece of Money that Peter was directed to take out of the Fiſh's Mouth, to pay the Tribute due for them both, amounted to four Drachms, or one Shekel; in our Money, about half a Crown: And the Reaſon, why our Saviour paid for none of the Apoſtles, but St. Peter only, was, becauſe theſe Receivers demanded it only of thoſe that dwelt at Capernaum (as our Saviour and St. Peter did) leaving the other Apoſtles to pay it in the ſeveral Places of their Abode.

But it is Time to reſume the Narrative.

About this Time the Feaſt of Tabernacles drew near; and ſome of our Lord's Relations (out of Vanity more than Good-will) were very earneſt with him to go up to Jeruſalem, to this great Concourſe of People, in order to ſhew his Miracles in the Capital, which hitherto (as they ſaid) had been concealed in an obſcure Part of the World: But our Lord, for the preſent, would not

not yield to their Importunity, though, in a ſhort Time, he ſet forward to Jeruſalem, but in a very private Manner, for fear of awakening the Jealouſy of his Enemies. As he was to paſs thro' the Province of Samaria, he ſent ſome of his Apoſtles to provide him Lodgings in one of the Villages; but the Inhabitants, perceiving that he was going to Jeruſalem to the Feaſt, were ſo uncivil, as to refuſe him Entertainment.

This Indignity, put upon their Maſter, ſo exaſperated James and his Brother John, that they deſired Leave of him (in Imitation of Elias) to command Fire down from Heaven, to conſume ſuch inhoſpitable Wretches; but inſtead of giving any ſuch Permiſſion, our Saviour took Care to inform them, that the Marks of a Chriſtian were Meekneſs and Love, not Fury and Revenge; that the true End and Deſign of his coming into the World was not to deſtroy, but to ſave Men's Lives; and that he might prove this his Doctrine by his holy Practice, when ten leprous Perſons, who came out of his Neighbourhood, where he had been ſo rudely treated, preſented themſelves with loud Cries to him for Help, his Compaſſion was as ready to relieve, as their Neceſſity to aſk; for while they were going to ſhew themſelves to the Prieſt (as he directed them) they all found themſelves cured. But, ſee the great Ingratitude of human Nature! of the ten who received this miraculous Bleſſing, but one returned to give our Saviour Thanks, and he was a Samaritan.

Having thus returned Good for Evil, and the greateſt Kindneſs for the moſt palpable Affront, our Lord proceeded on his Journey, and came to another Village, where he lodged that Night; but before he arrived at Jeruſalem, he ſent out Seventy of his Diſciples, by two and two together, (in the ſame Manner as he had ſent his twelve Apoſtles) into thoſe Places which he himſelf, in a ſhort Time, intended to viſit, and gave them Inſtructions, much of the ſame Import, with what, upon the like Occaſion, he had given the Apoſtles.

The Feaſt of Tabernacles always continued eight Days, but, for ſome Time after his Arrival, our Saviour did not appear publickly, which occaſioned no ſmall Enquiry, and various Diſcourſes concerning him; ſome ſaying, that he was a good Man, and others, an Impoſtor, who deluded the People. At length, when every one began to deſpair of ſeeing him, about the Middle of the Feaſt he ſhewed himſelf openly, and went and taught in the Temple, to the great Admiration of the Jews, who were not a little ſurprized to find him ſo perfect in the Scriptures, whoſe Education had been deſtitute of all Learning: But, to obviate this Exception, he gave them to underſtand, that the Doctrine wherein he inſtructed them, was not of human Acquiſition, but divine Inſpiration; and that it was a very baſe and ungenerous Thing in them, to endeavour to take away the Life of one, who taught them nothing but what was agreeable to the Law of Moſes, whereof they

they made ſo loud a Profeſſion. In this Manner he preached to the People for the remaining Part of the Feaſt; and on the laſt, and greateſt Day thereof, took Occaſion from the Cuſtom of fetching Water from the Fountain of Siloah in great Pomp, and pouring it upon the Altar of Burnt-offerings in great Abundance, to acquaint them with the future Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, which he intended to ſend down upon all thoſe that believed in him.

Thoſe, who knew the great Hatred which the ruling Part of the Nation had conceived againſt him, admired to hear him ſpeak with ſo much Freedom and Intrepidity; and thoſe, who had ſeen the Number and Greatneſs of his Miracles, were by them convinced that he was the true Meſſiah; but the Prejudice of his being a Galilean, and not acknowledged by any of their Rulers and learned Rabbies, led others into a contrary Perſuaſion. In the Concluſion, Officers were ſent from the Sanhedrim to apprehend him, but they were ſo taken with his Perſon and Preaching, that they became his Diſciples; for upon their Return, they told the Council, that they could not execute their Office, becauſe never Man ſpake like him; ſo that the Phariſees, who were Part of the Aſſembly, being more enraged at their Reaſon which they gave, than the Neglect of their Duty, upbraided them for being ſo eaſily ſeduced, and for following the Error of an ignorant Mob; until Nicodemus, who had formerly converſed with our Lord, and was indeed a ſecret Diſciple of his, ſeeing with what Violence his Enemies were bent againſt him, could not forbear interpoſing in his Behalf, by urging the Unlawfulneſs of condemning a Perſon without hearing; ſo that, after ſome Reflections thrown upon him, as a Favourer of this Galilean, who could have no Pretenſions (as they ſaid) to the Title of a Prophet, the Aſſembly broke up, without proceeding any farther againſt him, becauſe indeed, as yet "his Time was not fully come.

Some Remarks may now be thought neceſſary on the foregoing Relation.

The Feaſt of Tabernacles, kept in Commemoration of the Iſraelites ſojourning in the Wilderneſs, and living in the Tents for the Space of forty Years, was one of the three great annual Feſtivals, wherein all the Males were obliged to appear at Jeruſalem. It began to be celebrated on the fifteenth Day of the Month Tizri (which anſwers in part to our September and October) and is the firſt Month in their civil, and the ſeventh in their ſacred Year.

Our Saviour's Words upon this Occaſion are,—"Ye go up to this Feaſt, I go not up yet to this Feaſt, for my Time is not yet fully come," John vii. 8. Here Grotius takes Notice, that the Greek Particle which anſwers to not yet, was not originally in the Text, becauſe (according to St. Jerom, contra Pelag. l. ii.) Porphyry accuſes Chriſt of Inconſtancy and Mutability, in ſaying, "I go not up to the Feaſt," when afterwards he went; and therefore he very modeſtly concludes, that this Particle was added by ſome Chriſtians, to

avoid the Force of this Objection. But why muſt Chriſtians be accuſed of altering the Scriptures, merely to ſave the Credit of an Heathen, and profeſſed Enemy to Chriſtianity, who might either read negligently, or meet with a deficient or currupt Latin Copy? Eſpecially ſince it is certain, that St. Chryſoſtom reads this Particle; that the Syriac and Arabic Verſions, the Alexandrian, and moſt other ancient Manuſcripts, have it; and that it entirely agrees with the Senſe both of the preceeding and ſubſequent Words.

Samaria was a Province that lay between Galilee and Judea, and our Saviour's neareſt Way to Jeruſalem was through it. But then it may be queſtioned, why the Samaritans, who lived at leſs Diſtance from Jeruſalem than the Galileans, came to be more corrupted in their Religion? To which the moſt probable Anſwer is,—That when the King of Aſſyria had taken Samaria, and carried away the People captive, 2 Kings xvii. 6. in their Room he planted Colonies of his own Subjects, who were groſs Idolaters; and more eſpecially in the Country of Samaria, properly ſo called, becauſe it was a Province which lay in the Heart of his new Conqueſt, and might therefore keep the others, that depended on it, in Subjection. Now theſe Idolaters mixing with the Jews that were left behind, made up a ſtrange Medley of Religion, which was not quite reformed, even in our Saviour's Time; and therefore he tells the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well, "Ye worſhip ye know not what, John iv. 22. whereas the People of Galilee, having few of the Aſſyrians planted among them, kept their Religion more pure and unmixed, and, after the Deſtruction of the Temple of Gerizim by John Hyrcanus, held conſtant Communion with the Temple of Jeruſalem, even though Gabinius, when he was Governor of Syria, had built the Samaritans another; and in Relation to this Communion it is, that our Saviour tells the ſame Woman (ſpeaking of himſelf, among the Galileans) "we know what we worſhip, for Salvation is of the Jews."

The great Multitude that accompanied our Saviour, and the little or no Proviſion that he uſually carried with him, made it neceſſary for ſome to go before to make Preparation for his Reception; and his two Apoſtles, James and John, are ſuppoſed to be the Perſons employed in this Capacity, becauſe we find them in particular reſenting the Indignity put upon their Maſter.

Joſephus tells us,——That as it was an uſual Thing for the Galileans to travel by the Way of Samaria to Jeruſalem, upon the Celebration of their Feſtivals, one Time as they paſſed by a Village called Nais, under the Juriſdiction of Samaria, and ſituated in the great Plain, there happened a Quarrel between the Paſſengers and Villagers, wherein ſeveral of the Galileans were ſlain, and which afterwards occaſioned a Civil War between theſe two Provinces.——And as it was a common Thing for the Samaritans to be angry with the Galileans in general, for paſſing by their Temple to go to Jeruſalem,

lem, ſo they might much more reſent it in our Saviour, becauſe as he was accounted a Prophet ſent from God, by this Action he plainly decided the Controverſy between them and the Jews, touching the Place which God had appointed for his religious Worſhip.

The Hiſtory of Elias (to which the Apoſtles refer us) is doubtleſs that, where, by the Direction of God, he called for Fire from Heaven to deſtroy thoſe Captains and their Companies, whom King Ahaziah ſent out to apprehend him, 2 Kings i. 10, &c. And when theſe two Apoſtles deſired the like Judgment upon the Village of Samaria, for refuſing to receive their Maſter, they verified the Name of being Sons of Thunder, which upon Account of their fiery Zeal, their Maſter had before given them, Mark iii. 17.

What the two Apoſtles had to alledge, in Behalf of their intended Severity againſt theſe Samaritans was, That they were Schiſmaticks, and had ſet up another Temple in Oppoſition to that at Jeruſalem; that they were Hereticks, and, together with the Worſhip of the God of Iſrael, had mixed that of Pagan Idols; that the Perſon, whom they had affronted had a Character much ſuperior to that of Elias; and that, by an exemplary Puniſhment, inflicted on this Village, they might convince the reſt of the Samaritans of God's Diſpleaſure againſt their Way of Worſhip, and of the divine Miſſion of their Maſter who was the true Meſſiah. But, notwithſtanding theſe plauſible Allegations, our Saviour rebuked them; and, in his Rebuke, gave them to underſtand, that a Spirit of Severity towards erroneous Perſons, in whomſoever it is found, is highly oppoſite to the calm Temper of Chriſtianity, which is pure and peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Works, James iii. 17, and that it was repugnant to the End for which he came into the World, which was to diſcountenance all Fierceneſs and Rage, and furious Zeal, that occaſion ſo many Miſchiefs among Mankind, and to beget in all his Followers ſuch a Diſpoſition, as exerts itſelf in Love, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs and Meekneſs, Gal. v. 22, 23. even to thoſe of the moſt contrary Tempers and Perſuaſions.

By the Prieſts to whom our Saviour remits the Lepers, we are to underſtand the Prieſts at Jeruſalem; for we can hardly ſuppoſe, that he would ſend them to thoſe of Mount Gerizim; when himſelf, both in his Words and Practice, had ſufficiently declared the Illegality of their Inſtitution: And therefore, by ſending them to Jeruſalem, where they were to make their Offerings for their Cleanſing, Lev. xiv. 2, &c. he not only decided the Controverſy between the Jews and the Samaritans, but gave them likewiſe to underſtand, that, before they reached Jeruſalem, he would undoubtedly heal them.

Thoſe, who would have it, that the ſeventy Diſciples, whom Chriſt ſent out, were choſen according to the Number of the Sanhedrim, imagine, that they were ſeventy-two, tho' the round Sum only be mentioned; but the general

neral Teſtimony of the Ancients is, that they were no more than ſeventy. What their Names were, is a Thing unknown, only we have an uncertain Account of twenty-eight of them out of Euſebius, Epiphanius, and Papias, and theſe are, Matthias, Mark, Luke, Barnabas, Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicholas, Juſtus, Apelles, Soſthenes, Rufus, Niger, Cephas, Thaddæus, Ariſtion, John, Barſabas, Andronicus, Junius, Silas, Lucius, Manean, Mnaſon and Ananias. Now, whereas ſome compare the Biſhops to the Apoſtles, and theſe ſeventy to the Preſbyters of the Church, and thence conclude, that theſe two Orders in the Miniſtry, one inferior to the other, were inſtituted by Chriſt himſelf, there is this Difference in the Matter, That, the ſeventy received not their Miſſion (as Preſbyters do) from Biſhops, but immediately from our Lord; as the Apoſtles did, and were ſent upon the ſame Errand, and with the ſame Powers. There is, however, I think, this Foundation for that, wherein St. Chryſoſtom, and others, place the Superiority of Biſhops over Preſbyters, viz. that the Power of Ordination belongs to them alone: For, tho' the Commiſſion to preach the Goſpel belonged to the ſeventy, as well as to the twelve Apoſtles, yet the Power of conferring the Holy Ghoſt by the Impoſition of Hands, was peculiar to the twelve, Acts viii. 14, &c. and this ſeems to be the Reaſon, why the conferring of the Holy Ghoſt, for the Uſe of the Miniſtry (which is done by the Impoſition of Hands) has perpetually been eſteemed peculiar to the Biſhops, who, in the eccleſiaſtical Stile, are always called the Succeſſors of the Apoſtles.

From the twenty-ninth Chapter of the Book of Numbers we learn, that on the firſt Day of the Feaſt of Tabernacles, thirteen Bullocks were to be offered; on the ſecond, twelve; on the third, eleven; on the fourth, ten; on the fifth, nine; on the ſixth, eight; on the ſeventh, ſeven: and the eighth, or laſt, only one; ſo that in regard to the Sacrifices, the laſt Day was the leaſt of all, and yet the Jews accounted it the greateſt, becauſe on that Day the King of Iſrael (as the Talmudiſts love to ſpeak) was entertained by his own People only, and not by thoſe of any other Nation. For their Tradition is, that on the firſt Day of the Feaſt, their Anceſtors (when the Temple was ſtanding) ſacrificed ſeventy Bullocks for the ſeventy Nations (for they ſuppoſe juſt ſo many) that are upon the Face of the Earth; but on the laſt Day no more than one, but that in the Name of the People of Iſrael only. And, as they imagine, that an earthly Prince may ſometimes (inſtead of a vaſt Entertainment) deſire but a ſmall Collation with his firſt Favourite, that they may have an Opportunity of ſome familiar Converſe together; ſo, upon the Account of the intimate Friendſhip with God, which the Jews, on that Day, thought themſelves admitted to, and the exceſſive Joy, which from the Senſe of that Friendſhip, they expreſſed in all the outward Significations of Muſick, Singing and Dancing, the laſt Day of the Feaſt

Feaſt of Tabernacles was always accounted the greateſt.

In theſe Words, " never Man ſpoke like him," there are two things remarkable, 1ſt, The Power of Chriſt's Preaching to change the Frame and Temper of Men's Spirits; for theſe Men came with Hearts alienated from Chriſt, and with Intention to apprehend, and carry him before the Chief-prieſts, but returned with great Admiration of his Excellency and Worth. 2dly, The Honeſty and Integrity of theſe Men is very remarkable; for they do not return with a Pretence that they feared the Multitude, and therefore thought it dangerous to apprehend him, but ingenuouſly confeſs, that they could not prevail with themſelves to lay violent Hands upon a Perſon whoſe Diſcourſes were ſo excellent and divine.

Our bleſſed Saviour was neither by Birth, nor by Deſcent a Galilean; but, admitting he had been ſo, 'twas a falſe Aſſertion to ſay, that no Prophet ever aroſe out of Galilee, ſince Nahum, tho' originally of the Tribe of Simeon (according to the Teſtimony of St. Jerom) was himſelf a Galilean, was born in that Province, and in Elciſi, the ſame Town which that Father came from; ſince Jonas was undoubtedly of Gath-hepher, in the Tribe of Zebulon, which lay in the Land of Galilee, 2 Kings xiv. 25. and, in the Opinion of ſeveral, Malachi was of the ſame Tribe, and born in the City of Sapha: For, as there is no Reaſon in Nature, ſo is there no Declaration of the divine Will, why a Galilean ſhould not be inſpired with the Gift of Prophecy, as well as any other Jew.

Some are of Opinion, that the Party of Sadducees in the Council, who held the Rites and Traditions of the Phariſees in great Contempt, joined with Nicodemus, in not having Chriſt condemned without a fair Hearing, which was no more, than what the Law required, Deut. i. 16, 17.

The next Part of the ſacred Story follows thus:

In the Evening, Jeſus repaired to the Mount of Olives, about a Mile from the City, and where he ſometimes uſed to paſs the Night with his Apoſtles. Early next Morning he returned to the Temple, and, as he was teaching the People that were gathered about him, the Scribes and Phariſees brought in a Woman taken in the Act of Adultery, and deſired him to give his Judgment in the Caſe. Their Purpoſe was to find an Occaſion of accuſing him, either of aſſuming a judicial Power, if he condemned her; or of annulling the Law, if he acquitted her: But he (as if he had not much minded them) ſtooped down and wrote ſomething with his Finger upon the Duſt of the Pavement; till upon their importuning him for an Anſwer, he raiſed himſelf up, and ſaid, " He that is without Sin among you, let him caſt the firſt Stone;" and ſo ſtooping down, wrote as before. This unexpected Anſwer baffled theſe inſidious Accuſers; who, thoroughly convinced of their own Crimes, retired, one by one, and left the Woman alone; ſo that when our Lord lifted himſelf up, and found none but the Woman

man ſtanding by him, he aſked her, what was become of her Accuſers, and whether any one had condemned her? And when he had underſtood, by her Anſwer, that no one had, "Neither do I condemn thee, ſaid he, go, and ſin no more."

After this Interruption, Jeſus returned to the Buſineſs of inſtructing the People, and in a ſublime Diſcourſe opened ſeveral great Myſteries of Chriſtianity, viz. his divine Miſſion, his Coequality with the Father, his Ability to give eternal Life to his Followers, and the Neceſſity of believing in him, which would be more evident after his Crucifixion; and thence taking Occaſion to expoſe the Wickedneſs and Degeneracy of thoſe who ſought to take away his Life, and how unlike to the Behaviour of the Sons of God and Abraham (whom they boaſted themſelves to be) ſuch cauſeleſs and inveterate Malice was, he ſo provoked them with his ſevere Reflections, and eſpecially with the Superiority which he claimed above Abraham, that they took up Stones to caſt at him, had he not miraculouſly conveyed himſelf out of their Hands.

Before our Lord left Jeruſalem, the ſeventy Diſciples, whom he had ſent to preach the Goſpel, returned from their Journey and Miniſtry, greatly rejoicing, becauſe the very Devils, by Virtue of his Name, were ſubjected to them; whereupon our Lord promiſed them ſtill greater Succeſs; inveſted them with Power to tread upon the moſt venomous Beaſts, and all the malignant Inſtruments of Satan, without the leaſt Harm; and, at the ſame Time, gave them Aſſurance of a Bleſſing more peculiarly theirs, viz. that their Names were recorded in Heaven; and ſo broke out into a Rapture of Joy, glorifying God for concealing the Myſteries of the Goſpel from the Great and Wiſe, and revealing them to the Simple and Ignorant; and to his Diſciples more eſpecially, who, in Virtue of that Revelation, enjoyed a Happineſs which many Kings and Prophets had in vain deſired.

Our Lord had ſcarce ended his Diſcourſe, when a Doctor of the Law ſtood up, and enquired of him, what was neceſſary to be done for the Attainment of that eternal Life, which he was ſo very liberal in promiſing to his Followers. Whereupon our Lord remitted him to the Law, which, according to the Doctor's own Account, conſiſted chiefly in the Love of God, and the Love of our Neighbour. But when he demanded farther, what the Notion of a Neighbour implied? Our Lord thought proper to anſwer this Queſtion by telling him,——"That, once upon a Time, a certain Jew, as he was travelling in the Road between Jeruſalem and Jericho, was robbed, ſtripped, barbarouſly uſed, and left almoſt dead with his Wounds; that by Chance a Prieſt came that Way, and ſaw the poor Wretch weltering in his Blood, but the Horror of the Sight did not affect him, he paſſed along unconcerned; that next came a Levite, but he too was as void of Tenderneſs and Compaſſion as was the Prieſt, though both of them were of the ſame Country

try with the Sufferer; that, at laſt, a Samaritan, a Stranger, and one abhorred by the Jews, ſeeing this diſtreſſed Perſon, with great Compaſſion came to him, raiſed his Head, recalled his fainting Spirits, and cloſed his gaping Wounds with the beſt Medicines he had; then, mounting him on his own Horſe, he gently conveyed him to the firſt Inn, where at his own Coſt, he entertained him while he ſtaid with him, and at his Departure, promiſed the Hoſt to be at whatever Expences more ſhould happen." From this plain Narration, the Doctor himſelf could not but conclude, that the Samaritan was the Neighbour to the Perſon in Diſtreſs, and conſequently, that the Notion of a Neighbour comprehended Men of all Nations, and all Religions whatever.

Let us now ſtop to take a Review of this Period of our Narration.

It is generally agreed, that, when our Saviour ſtooped down to write with his Finger in the Duſt, he wrote ſome memorable Sentence or other, but what that Sentence was, the Conjectures of learned Men have been various. Some have imagined, that it was the Reproof againſt a rigid and uncharitable Temper, which occurs in his Sermon on the Mount, "Why beholdeſt thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but conſidereſt not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?" Matt. vii. 3. others, that it was the very Words, which, upon his raiſing himſelf up, he pronounced to the Woman's Accuſers, "He, that is without Sin among you, let him firſt caſt a Stone at her," John viii. 7. and others again, that it might rather be that Paſſage in the Pſalmiſt, "Unto the Ungodly ſaith God, Why doſt thou preach my Laws, and take my Covenant in thy Mouth? Whereas thou hateſt to be reformed, and haſt caſt my Words behind thee. When thou ſaweſt a Thief thou conſentedſt unto him, and haſt been Partaker with the Adulterers," Pſal. l. 16, &c. But all this is mere Gueſs-work: And it ſeems more prudent to ſay nothing of the Actions of our Saviour, when we are not admitted to the Reaſons of them.

The Rabbinical Writers tell us, that when Men or Women were convicted of Adultery, they were led out to the Brow of an Hill, with their Hands tied behind their Backs, where their Accuſers puſhed them down headlong; that, if with the Fall they were killed, there was no more done to them; but if they were ſtill alive, the ſame Accuſers were to roll great Stones upon them, and if theſe did not diſpatch them, the Company then all took up Stones, and quite overwhelmed them with them. But we have nothing of all this in the Law of Moſes. In all the Places where he makes mention of the Puniſhment, we only find, that the Criminal was to be led out of the City, "and ſtoned with Stones till he died," and that, "the Hands of the Witneſſes ſhould be firſt upon him, to put him to Death, and afterwards the Hands of all the People," Deut. xvii. 7. It is an Alluſion to this Paſſage that our Saviour ſays, "Let him, that is without Sin among you, caſt the

firſt

firſt Stone," becauſe it badly becomes theſe, who are guilty, either of the ſame, or greater Crimes, to be ſo zealous for the Puniſhment of others. This however hinders not, but that Magiſtrates, who are intruſted with the Execution of the Laws, ſhould put them in Force againſt Malefactors, even though themſelves are not intirely exempt from Sin; but ſtill it reminds them, that they ſhould execute Judgment with Compaſſion and Tenderneſs, and as much Moderation as the Law will allow them; conſidering that they themſelves are not free from Guilt, but as obnoxious to Puniſhment for other Sins, as thoſe poor Creatures are, who have fallen into Crimes that are puniſhable by human Judicatures.

In the very next Words it is ſaid, that the Woman ſtood in the Midſt of the People, and our Lord's Apoſtles, who were conſtant Attendants, were doubtleſs not far from him; the Meaning therefore of the Expreſſion muſt be, that ſhe was left without any of her Accuſers, who of Shame, ſneaked away, being convicted in their Conſciences, that, whatever the Woman was, they were no proper Evidences againſt her: Nor is it to be wondered, that upon this Occaſion, all the Woman's Accuſers departed from her, ſince the Jews themſelves own, that Adulteries did multiply under the ſecond Temple, when their Rabbins came to permit every one to have four or five Wives, and ſaid, that they ſinned not, if, after the Example of the Patriarchs, when they ſaw a beautiful Woman, they deſired to have her.

Both Selden and Fagius are of Opinion, that this Woman might come under the Number of them, whoſe Caſe is thus repreſented in the Words of Deuteronomy. "If a Damſel, that is a Virgin, be betrothed to an Huſband, and a Man find her in the City, and he lie with her, then ye ſhall bring them both out unto the Gate of the City, and ye ſhall ſtone them with Stones, that they die; the Damſel, becauſe ſhe cried not, being in the City; and the Man, becauſe he hath humbled his Neighbour's Wife," Deut. xxii. 23, 24. The Puniſhment of ſtoning, which this Law mentions, and the Accuſers of this Woman here inſiſt on, ſeem to favour his Notion; and the Indulgence which our Saviour ſhewed her, looks as if ſhe had ſuffered ſome Kind of Violence, though ſhe was not entirely innocent. Our Saviour however could not act in the Capacity of a Judge, becauſe that was no Part of his preſent Miniſtry: Though therefore he was ſo far from approving her Conduct, that he ſufficiently blamed her, in bidding her ſin no more, yet was he reſtrained from pronouncing any Sentence of Condemnation upon her, becauſe the End of his coming at this Time into the World was not to judge the World, but to ſave it, John xii. 47.

The Power, which our Saviour gave to the Seventy, when he ſent them out to preach the Goſpel, was only that of healing the Sick wherever they went, Luke x. 9. but finding that, upon naming their Maſter's Name, they were able likewiſe to cure thoſe that were poſſeſſed of Devils, this they made the greater

greater Matter of their Joy, and, at their Return, told it with more Pleaſure, becauſe it was no Part of their Commiſſion. It is to be obſerved, however, that our Lord himſelf caſt out Devils by a divine Power reſiding in himſelf; his Diſciples only in Virtue of his Name, or by a Power derived from him. Seeing then that this Power accompanied them in all Parts of the World, 'twas neceſſary that Chriſt's Preſence ſhould be with them every where, and ſuch a Preſence was a certain Proof of his being God.

Our Saviour's Promiſe that they ſhould tread on venomous Beaſts without Hurt, ſeems to have a plain Alluſion to thoſe in the Pſalmiſt, where, under the Metaphor of treading on the Scorpion and Baſiliſk, Pſal. xci. 13. God promiſes the good Man a more than common Protection from all Sorts of Dangers and Enemies. But there is no Reaſon however, I think, why our Saviour's Words may not here be taken in a literal Senſe, ſince they agree ſo well with what he promiſes all true Believers in another Place, "they ſhall take up Serpents," (as we find one faſtened upon St. Paul's Hand without doing him any Harm, Acts xxviii. 3.) "and if they drink any deadly Thing, it ſhall not hurt them," Mark xvi. 18.

The Words, that "their Names were written in Heaven," allude to a known Cuſtom in well-governed Cities, where Regiſters are kept of the Names of their Inhabitants, and do plainly denote the Title, which Believers have to eternal Happineſs; but by no Means an abſolute Election to it. For, as a Citizen, when he miſbehaves egregiouſly, and thereupon becomes infamous, has his Name razed out of the City Regiſter, and is himſelf diſinfranched of all his Privileges; ſo we read of ſome, whom Chriſt threatens "to blot their Names out of the Book of Life," Revel. xxii. 19. For, "as Men are written in this Book (ſays St. Baſil on Iſaiah iv. 3.) when they are converted from Vice to Virtue, ſo they are blotted out of it, when they backſlide from Virtue to Vice." Of the Twelve we read that one was certainly a Reprobate, and tho' it becomes us to hope better of the ſeventy, yet our Saviour's Words give us no Room to think, that they were all predeſtinated to eternal Life, ſince his only Meaning is, That he had called, choſen and ſeparated them, from great Numbers that would periſh; that he had given them the Grace of Faith and Admiſſion to the Chriſtian Covenant, but that, on themſelves it was incumbent, by the Preſervation of their Faith, and the Practice of good Works, comporting therewith, "to make their Calling and Election ſure."

The Law of Moſes does no where expreſly promiſe eternal Life to thoſe, that obſerved its Precepts. It is wholly taken up with temporal Bleſſings and Proſperities; and yet the Generality of the Jews were not deſtitute of the Hopes of another Life; for their Writers, a little before, and after the Captivity, are very full of it, ſo that it became the prevailing Opinion of the whole Nation, and was received by their two principal Sects, the Phariſees and Eſſenes;

ſenes; as for the Sadducees, who had other Notions of the Matter, their Religion was very little, and their Principles purely Epicurean.

In our Saviour's Time, the Phariſees had reſtrained the Word Neighbour to ſignify thoſe of their own Religion, and their own Friends only; and all who differed from them in any of theſe Reſpects, they indulged the People the Liberty to hate, nor would they permit them to extend the leaſt Office of common Civility to any ſuch. But our Saviour overthrew theſe falſe Maxims of the Jewiſh Doctors, and reduced the Precept of univerſal Charity to its firſt Intention, when in this Parable of the Jew and the Samaritan, he plainly demonſtrated that no difference of Nation or Religion, no Quarrel or Reſentment, no Enmity or Alienation of Affections, can exempt us from owning any Perſon to be our Neighbour.

Between Jeruſalem and Jericho (which were about ſeven Leagues diſtant) the Road was very infamous for Murders and Robberies, for in it was a Place called the Valley of Adommim, or of Bloody Men, becauſe of the great Quantity of Blood that was there ſpilt; and for this Reaſon it is, that our Lord lays the Scene of his Parable in this Place.

To make the Deſcription more lively, our Saviour inſtances in two Men, a Prieſt and a Levite, who took no Pity of this Jew in Diſtreſs, though they were of the ſame Religion and Country; nay, though they were Miniſters and Teachers of the Religion which he profeſſed; and might therefore be preſumed, even in Virtue of their Office and Education, to have more extenſive Notions, and Hearts more capable of tender Impreſſions, than the ruder Vulgar; and, for the ſame Reaſon, he introduces a Samaritan, as acting a different Part, and taking all imaginable Care of this wounded Jew, though between the Jews and Samaritans there was a moſt inveterate Hatred.

The Words in the Text are, pouring in Wine and Oil; Oil, to eaſe and aſſuage the Pain; and Wine, to cleanſe and heal the Wound: And theſe Things the good Samaritan had about him, becauſe the Inns in the Eaſtern Countries (even as it is ſtill) afforded nothing but barely Houſe-room; and therefore the Cuſtom was, for the Traveller to carry all Kinds of Neceſſaries, both for his Bed and Board, along with him.

The Words in the Text are, "When he departed he took out two Pence," Luke x. 35. The Greek Word which we render a Penny, was a kind of Roman Coin, much about ſeven Pence Half-penny in our Money. In the New Teſtament (for it never occurs in the Old) it is uſually put for a Piece of Money in general, i. e. for a Shekel, which was the moſt common Coin among the Jews, before they became ſubject to the Greeks and Romans; ſo that, in this Senſe, what the Samaritan gave the Hoſt amounted to five Shillings, or thereabout, which is more conſiſtent with the Reſt of his Character, than that he ſhould leave ſo ſmall a Matter behind him.

Had

Had our Saviour propounded the Parable in this Manner: That a certain Samaritan fell among Thieves, and that a Prieſt and a Levite paſſed by without offering him any Help, this Doctor of the Law might have replied, that he did nothing but right, becauſe the Samaritan was no Neighbour of theirs: But now, as he makes a Jew the Subject of the Parable, and the Object of the Samaritan's Compaſſion, he draws him to acknowledge the Voice of Nature, which declares that every Man is Neighbour to his Fellow-Creature, and that the Law of Moſes has not annulled, but perfected the Law of Nature, by commanding us to "love our Neighbour as ourſelves," Levit. xix. 18.

We now go on with our Story thus.

As ſoon as the Feaſt of Tabernacles was ended, our Lord departed from Jeruſalem, and, in the Beginning of his Journey, went to a ſmall Village called Bethany, about two Miles Eaſt of Jeruſalem, where he was joyfully received by a Woman named Martha, who, with her Siſter Mary and her Brother Lazarus, was highly in Favour with him. While Martha was buſy in making Preparation for his Entertainment, her Siſter Mary ſat with the Company, liſtening to his Inſtructions; and when Martha complained to him, that her Siſter had left the whole Burden of the Buſineſs upon her, and therefore deſired him to ſend her to her Aſſiſtance, our Lord commended Mary's Choice; and, though he did not ſlight Martha's Civility, yet her Siſter's Devoutneſs and Attention to his Doctrine (which was the one Thing chiefly neceſſary) he preferred before it.

Upon his Return to Galilee, as he was one Day praying with his Diſciples in a private Place, they, taking it into Conſideration how neceſſary it was for them to be directed in the right Performance of that Duty, deſired of him to compoſe a Form of Prayer for their Uſe, as the Baptiſt had done for his Diſciples: Whereupon he not only gave them the ſame excellent Form (called the Lord's Prayer) which he had given above eighteen Months before in his Sermon on the Mount, but encouraged them likewiſe, from the Conſideration of God's Goodneſs and fatherly Affection (far more indulgent to his Children than any earthly Parents were to theirs) to be conſtant in their Petitions to him, with Fervour, Importunity, and an indefatigable Perſeverance, as the likelieſt Way to obtain a gracious Anſwer to them.

Not long after this, upon our Lord's curing a Demoniac, that was dumb, the Phariſees renewed their old diabolical Cavil, of his ejecting Devils by Beelzebub, which he confuted by the ſame Arguments he had formerly uſed upon that Account; and when they again demanded of him a Sign from Heaven, he again made the ſame Reply: Nay, not only ſo, but when he was invited to Dinner, one Day, by a certain Perſon of that Sect, who was not a little offended at his ſitting down at Meat without waſhing his Hands, he took Occaſion from thence to inveigh very ſeverely againſt ridiculous

Superſtition, in affecting outward Neatneſs in the Manner of Living, while they neglected to cleanſe their Souls from internal Pollutions. And ſo, proceeding to reproach both them, and the Scribes, and Teachers of the Law, with their Pride and Prevarication, their Hypocriſy and Spirit of Perſecution, he ſo exaſperated them, that they uſed all poſſible Methods to enſnare him in his Speech, and to find ſome Accuſation againſt him, whereby they might deſtroy him.

One of the Company, however, ſeeing with what Authority he reproved, and determined among the People, deſired of him to arbitrate between him and his Brother, concerning an Eſtate which had lately fallen to them: But this Office he choſe to decline, and thence took Occaſion to preach againſt Covetouſneſs, or placing our Felicity in worldly Poſſeſſions; and, to enforce this, he propounded the Parable of a certain rich Man, who, when he had acquired Eſtate enough, propoſed to indulge himſelf in Voluptuouſneſs, but was diſappointed by the Intervention of a ſudden Death: He therefore exhorted his Diſciples not to be too anxious about the Things of this Life, but to caſt their Care upon God's Providence, who, having promiſed them a Kingdom in Heaven, would not fail of ſupplying them with what was neceſſary here. He exhorted them alſo to Charity, to Watchfulneſs, to Preparation againſt the Day of Judgment, at the Arreſt of Death, and (under the Emblems of Stewards or Governors in great Mens Houſes) recommended Gentleneſs and Temperance, and cautioned them againſt indulging themſelves in any Kind of Exceſs, upon the Confidence of their Lord's Abſence or Delay.

While he was thus diſcourſing to his Diſciples, News was brought him of the Maſſacre, which Pilate had cauſed to be made of ſome Galileans while they were offering their Sacrifices at the Altar; and the Conſequence which he drew from thence (as well as from another ſad Accident, that had lately happened in Jeruſalem, where the Fall of the Tower of Siloam had deſtroyed no leſs than eighteen Perſons) was, not that theſe Sufferers were greater Sinners than their Neighbours, but that their Sufferings were intended to lead others to Repentance, which if they did not, in all Probability they would meet with the like or worſe Judgments: And then to engage them all to a ſpeedy Repentance, he ſet forth the Patience of the Almighty towards them, in the Parable of a Fig-tree, which the Maſter of the Vineyard ordered to be cut down, becauſe, for three Years, it had borne no Fruit; but the Gardener promiſing to uſe a more than ordinary Care and Diligence about it, prevailed with him to let it ſtand one Year longer, however, with this Determination, that, if it ſtill continued unfruitful, he would then deſtroy it.

A few Obſervations on the foregoing Paſſages are here neceſſary.

Interpreters have given themſelves ſome Trouble in determining what that one Thing is, which our Saviour accounts

accounts needful. Some of the Ancients are of Opinion, that our Lord, in this Expreſſion, told Martha, that one Diſh was enough. But, beſides the Lowneſs of the Senſe, the great Company that attended our Lord, ſeventy Diſciples, and twelve Apoſtles, to be ſure, if no more, ſhews the Incongruouſneſs of this. Others will have this one Thing needful, to be a Life of Meditation and Contemplation, which Mary had all along addicted herſelf to; but her chuſing to take the Advantage of our Saviour's Company, to hear him for an Hour or two, rather than prepare a Supper for him, is not Foundation enough for this Conjecture; and therefore we cannot but think, that the moſt general Interpretation, concerning the Care of the Soul with Reference to Eternity, is the beſt.

The Practice among the Jews, of referring civil Matters to eccleſiaſtical Perſons, as Judges, began in the Captivity of Babylon, when, by this Means, the Jews avoided the bringing their Differences before Heathen Judges. Under the Dominion of the Romans they were indulged a greater Liberty, and had civil Courts made up of Perſons of their own Religion. In Caſes of private Difference between Man and Man, it was uſual to make either the Conſiſtory of three, or ſome others, choſen by the contending Parties, Arbitrators. Whether both theſe Brothers had agreed to refer their Difference to our Lord's Determination, or this one of them only deſired him to interpoſe his Authority, and to injoin, at leaſt to perſuade his Brother to come to an Accommodation, it is difficult to ſay, becauſe the Scripture is ſilent: But this may be obſerved, that the ordinary Rule of Inheritance among the Jews was, for the eldeſt Son to have a double Portion of his Father's Eſtate, and the reſt to be divided equally among the other Children; but, in what came by the Mother, the eldeſt had no Prerogative above the reſt, the Diviſion among them was equal. Whatever then the Controverſy between theſe Brothers was, our Saviour might very juſtly refuſe to intermeddle in it, and that, not only becauſe it was inconſiſtent with his Deſign of coming into the World, which was to promote Men's ſpiritual, rather than their temporal Intereſts, but becauſe it might probably have drawn upon him the Envy and Calumny of the Jewiſh Rulers, who might be apt to ſay, that he took upon him an Office, to which he had no Call, in Prejudice to them who were legally appointed to it.

The general Opinion is, that the Maſſacre which Pilate had cauſed of ſome Galileans, relates to the Sedition which Judas Gaulonites raiſed againſt the Roman Government in Judea, when he, and one Sadducus, a Phariſee, poſſeſſed the People with a Notion, "That Taxes were a Badge of their "Slavery; that they ought to ac-"knowledge no Sovereign, but God "himſelf; nor pay any Tribute, but "to his Temple." It was in Galilee, very probably, where this Judas firſt broached theſe Sentiments, and there acquired ſuch a Multitude of Follow-

ers

ers and Abettors, as made Joſephus call him Galileus, as well as Gaulonites. Nay, all his Followers in general, though they were of different Provinces by Birth obtained the ſame Name. But when they came to Jeruſalem, at one of the great Feſtivals, and began to ſpread theſe ſeditious Notions againſt Cæſar; Pilate, who was then the Roman Governor, having had Intelligence of it, cauſed a conſiderable Number of them to be ſlain in the Temple, while they were ſacrificing.

The Fountain of Siloam roſe at the Foot of the Wall of the Eaſt Part of the City of Jeruſalem. The Tower, called after its Name, was doubtleſs built upon the Wall, not far from it; and, being now become antient, might fall upon ſuch a Number of People, either paſſing by or ſtanding under it. But how this Accident came to paſs we have no Manner of Certainty, becauſe this Paſſage in St. Luke is the only Place where we find any Mention made of this Piece of Hiſtory.

To verify the Prediction of our Saviour upon the impenitent Jews, that the like or worſe Judgments ſhould befal them, we may remember what Joſephus has told us of them, viz. that, under the Government of Cumanus, twenty Thouſand of them were deſtroyed about the Temple: That, upon the Admiſſion of the Idumæans into the City, eight Thouſand and five hundred of the High-prieſt's Party were ſlain, inſomuch that there was a Flood of Blood quite round the Temple: That, upon the threefold Faction that happened in Jeruſalem, before the Siege of the Romans, the Temple was every where polluted with Slaughter; the Prieſts were ſlain in the Exerciſe of their Function; many, who came to worſhip, fell before their Sacrifices; and the dead Bodies of Strangers and Natives were promiſcuouſly blended together, and ſprinkled the Altar with their Blood; and that, upon the Romans taking the City and Temple, Mountains of dead Bodies were piled up about the Altar; Streams of Blood ran down the Steps of the Temple; ſeveral were deſtroyed by the Fall of Towers; and others choaked in the ſultry Ruins of the Galleries over the Porches.

Some of the Ancients are of Opinion, that, by the three Years Unfruitfulneſs of the Fig-Tree, we are to underſtand the three Diſpenſations under which Mankind have lived, viz. under the natural Law, from the Beginning of the World, to the Time of Moſes; under the written Law, from Moſes to Jeſus Chriſt; and under the evangelical Law, from Jeſus Chriſt to the End of the World. Others rather mean by them, the three Kinds of Government under which the Jews had lived, viz. the Government of Judges, from Joſhua to Saul; the Government of Kings, from Saul to the Babyloniſh Captivity; and the Government of High-Prieſts, from the Captivity to the Time of Jeſus Chriſt. But theſe Explications are a little too arbitrary; nor will the three Years of our Saviour's Preaching among the Jews come up to the Point, becauſe the Jews were not

not deſtroyed the next Year (as the barren Fig-tree was to be cut down) but forty Years after our Lord's Aſcenſion. All that is meant by the Expreſſion therefore is, that God gave them all the Time, and all the Means, that could be deſired, to make them inexcuſable; and the Term of three Years ſeems rather to be mentioned, becauſe the Fruit of ſome Fig-trees comes not to Maturity, till the third Year.

But to reſume the Thread of our Story. Every Sabbath-day our Lord's Cuſtom was to preach in one of the Synagogues; and while he was thus employed, he obſerved a Woman, who for the Space of eighteen Years, had laboured under a Spirit of Infirmity, which bowed down her Body ſo, that ſhe was not able to lift herſelf up. Here was a proper Object for his Compaſſion and Power to exert themſelves; and therefore calling the Woman to him, he laid his Hands upon her, and immediately ſhe became ſtraight, and glorified God. At this the Ruler of the Synagogue became ſo very envious and diſpleaſed, that he told the People, There were ſix Days in the Week allowed by God for Labour, and that on thoſe they might come for Cure, but not on the Sabbath, which was a Day appointed for Reſt. But our Lord ſoon made him aſhamed of his Hypocriſy, by an Argument drawn from their own Practice of looſing an Ox or an Aſs from the Stall, on the Sabbath-day, and leading it away to watering; and much more then might he be permitted to cure, on that Day, a Daughter of Abraham, whom Satan, for ſo many Years, had afflicted with a ſore Diſeaſe. Whereupon his Adverſaries were ſilenced; but the People were all glad and rejoiced at his glorious Actions.

The Feaſt of Dedication was approaching, when, after ſeveral Removals, our Lord repaired again to Jeruſalem, and, as he was walking in the Streets, on the Sabbath-Day, he ſaw a poor Man that was blind from his very Birth. Upon his calling the Man to him, his Diſciples aſked him, whether it was the Man's own, or his Parents Sin, that had brought that Calamity upon him? But his Blindneſs, as he told them, was not ſent for the Puniſhment of any one's Sin, but for the greater Manifeſtation of God's Glory; and ſo ſpitting upon the Ground, he made ſome Clay, and having anointed his Eyes therewith, he ſent him to waſh them in the Pool of Siloam; which accordingly he did, and returned with ſuch perfect Eye-ſight, that his Neighbours were amazed, and began to queſtion whether he was the ſame Man, that uſed to ſit begging, until he aſſured them, that he was the very Perſon, and to ſatisfy them farther, not only told who his Phyſician was, but in what Manner his Cure was effected.

Various were the Cenſures and Opinions of Men upon this Occaſion. The Phariſees, to diminiſh the Credit of the Miracle, ſaid, that Jeſus could not be a Prophet ſent from God, becauſe he violated the Sabbath; but others again replied, that no Impoſter could be permitted to work ſuch Miracles, as had

had apparently the Finger of God in them. Thoſe who were averſe to believe the Miracle, or in Hopes of making the Thing look intricate, ſent for the Parents of the Man that was cured, and aſked them theſe three Queſtions: Whether he was their Son? Whether he was born blind? And whether they knew how, and by whom he was cured? To the two firſt Queſtions they anſwered directly, that he was their Son, and was born blind; but as to the laſt, they referred them to him, who (as they told them) was of Age to anſwer for himſelf; not daring to ſay any more for Fear of the Sanhedrim, who had made an Order to excommunicate any Perſon who ſhould acknowledge Jeſus to be Chriſt. Him therefore they began to examine; and to draw him from the good Opinion he had conceived of his Phyſician, bade him aſcribe the Glory of his Cure wholly to God, and not to look upon Jeſus with any Veneration, who was a Sinner and Sabbath-Breaker, and conſequently could not come from God. To which the Man boldly replied, "That it was very unaccountable, that they ſhould not perceive from whence the Man was, whom God had endued with ſuch a miraculous Power of opening the Eyes of one blind, a Thing that was never heard of before, ſince the World began; and that, ſince it was a certain Truth, that God heareth not Sinners, if he were not ſent and impowered by God, he could never do ſuch wonderful Cures as theſe." This provoked them ſo highly, that they firſt upbraided him with his former Blindneſs, as a Character of ſome extraordinary Ill in him, and then caſt him out of the Synagogue with Diſgrace: But Jeſus ſhortly after met him, and received him into his Church: For he declared to him, that he was the Meſſiah; and the poor Man believing on him, immediately fell down proſtrate at his Feet, and adored him.

After that our Lord had received the poor Man's Homage, he continued his Diſcourſe, and under the Allegory of a Shepherd and his Sheep, proved the Phariſees to be no better than blind Guides, nay, than Thieves and Robbers, who had climbed up into the Sheepfold, or made themſelves Rulers and Governors in God's Church, without any proper Commiſſion from him. Upon the ſame Ground he condemned all thoſe falſe Chriſts, who before him had uſurped the Title of the Meſſiah, and aſſerted his own Right by an Argument, that no other Shepherd durſt produce, viz. his laying down his Life for his Sheep; which were to conſiſt of Gentiles as well as Jews, and all together make up one Flock.

Let us here explain and illuſtrate what we have now advanced.

In every Synagogue there was a conſiderable Number of Doctors of the Law, who in the Goſpel are frequently called Rulers or Governors, and over theſe there was uſually one chief Preſident. But the Perſon here ſeems not to have been the chief Preſident, but one of the ſubordinate Rulers, becauſe we find him not addreſſing himſelf directly to Chriſt (which, not improbably, had he been the Preſident, he would

would have taken Courage to do) but only to the People in general, though by them he only obliquely ſtruck at our Saviour.

Our Saviour declared this Ruler of the Synagogue to be a Hypocrite, partly, becauſe he placed his Holineſs in the Obſervation of the ritual Precepts of the Law (ſuch as bodily Reſt on the Sabbath-day) to the Diſparagement of the Works of Mercy and other great Matters of eternal Obligations; and partly, becauſe he pretended to a great Zeal for the Performance of God's Commands, when all the while, he was rather actuated by a malevolent Envy to the Glory of Chriſt, which he, to whom his Heart was open, perfectly knew.

When Judas Maccabæus had cleanſed the Temple, which had been polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes, he again dedicated the Altar; and this is ſuppoſed to be the Dedication, in Memory of which the Jews continued to celebrate a Feaſt which fell out in the Winter in the Month Caſlen, between the thirteenth and fourteenth of November; and being the ſame, in all Probability, with what in the Goſpel is called Ta Egkainia, was honoured and approved by our Saviour's Preſence, though but of human Inſtitution.

It has been obſerved before, that our Saviour made Choice of the Sabbath-Day, as a Day, wherein he did many of his mighty Works. It was on this Day that he cured the impotent Man, who lay at the Pool of Bethesda, John v. 10. On this Day that he had healed him that had the withered Hand, Matt. xii. 10. and now on this Day likewiſe, that he gave Sight to the Man that was born blind, John ix. 14. and poſſibly he might chuſe this, becauſe it was the Day whereon he ordinarily preached that heavenly Doctrine, which he confirmed by theſe miraculous Works; or perhaps, that he might inſtruct the Jews (if they would have received Inſtruction) in the right Obſervation of the Sabbath, and arm his Diſciples againſt that pernicious Doctrine of the Phariſees, viz. that it was not lawful to do Good, or to perform Works of Mercy and Compaſſion, on that Day.

What the Diſciples might mean by the Sin of the blind Man's Parents is no hard Matter to ſolve, conſidering the ſtrict Prohibition in the Law, Lev. xx. 18. of not coming near a menſtruous Woman, which was thought to have ſo ill Influence upon the Child, as to make it obnoxious to Leproſy or Mutilation, and might conſequently be the Cauſe of this Perſon's Blindneſs: But what we are to underſtand by his own Sin, before he was born, is not ſo eaſy to be determined. That it cannot relate to the original Sin, which he brought into the World with him, is evident, becauſe all Mankind (our Lord excepted) are equally guilty of this; nor does this entail upon them any corporeal Imperfection: And therefore the Sin here intended, muſt be ſomething ſpecial and perſonal. Now, whoever conſiders, that the Opinion of the Platoniſts and Pythagoreans, concerning the Pre-exiſtence of Souls, their Tranſmigration from one Body to another, and being ſent into Bodies bet-

ter or worſe, according to their Merit or Demerit, had obtained among the Jews, and more eſpecially among the Phariſees, need not much wonder to find our Lord's Diſciples infected with it, or at leaſt deſirous to know their Maſter's Sentiments about it. The Author of the Book of Wiſdom, where, ſpeaking of himſelf, he tells us, "that, being good, he came into a Body undefiled," i. e. free from any notable Infirmity, ch. viii. 20. gives Countenance to this Doctrine; and in the Writings of Philo and Joſephus we have it confirmed to us: And therefore the Diſciples may well be ſuppoſed to enquire here, whether our Lord allowed of the prevailing Notion, viz. That the Soul of this Man might be put into this imperfect Body, for the Puniſhment of what he had done, either in or out of the Body, in a preexiſtent State.

It muſt not be thought, that God did any ways actively occur to make this Man blind, though in his Wiſdom, he thought fit to leave this Imperfection in the plaſtick Matter, whereof he was formed, unrectified, that thereby he might ſhew by his miraculous Cure, a powerful Motive to believe.

We read of nothing medicinal in this Water of Siloam, only our Lord was pleaſed to ſend the blind Man to waſh his Eyes there, as a Probation of his Faith and Obedience; in the ſame Manner as of old, Naaman the Syrian was ſent to waſh in the River Jordan.

Our Saviour's healing the blind Man on the Sabbath-day, occaſioned the Phariſees to ſay, that Jeſus could not be a Prophet ſent from God, becauſe he violated the Sabbath: And yet they themſelves acknowledge, that a Prophet might do, and command Things contrary to the Reſt required by the Sabbath, which they alſo prove by the Example of Joſhua, who commanded, that "the Ark ſhould be carried round Jericho, the armed Men going before, and after it, ſeven Days," one of which muſt be, the Sabbath, Joſh. vi. How then could that, which Prophets, by the known Principles of the Jews, were allowed to do, prove, that Jeſus was no Prophet, eſpecially if we conſider, that by theſe Actions of Mercy and Goodneſs he did not indeed violate the Reſt of the Sabbath, but only their corrupt Traditions concerning it.

The general Opinion is, that among the Jews there were three Kinds of Excommunication; that the firſt was called Niddui, that is to ſay, Separation, which laſted for thirty Days, and ſeparated the Perſon from the Uſe of all Things holy: The ſecond was called Cherem or Execration, which excluded the Perſon from the Synagogue, and deprived him of all civil Commerce: And the third Shammatha, or Exciſion. which removed him from all Hopes of returning to the Synagogue any more. But Selden maintains, that theſe three Terms Niddui, Cherem and Sammatha, are oftentimes ſynonymous, and that the Jews, properly ſpeaking, never had more than two Sorts of Excommunication, the greater and the leſs; though moſt are agreed, that it was the greater Sort of Excommunication, which the Sanhedrim

Sanhedrim threatened to any one that ſhould confeſs that Jeſus was the Chriſt; becauſe the Parents of the blind Man were ſo fearful of it, that they durſt not ſpeak out.

They who loſe their Sight by a Diſeaſe, may be cured; but no Man, no not Moſes, or any of the Prophets, ever did, or ever could, without the Aſſiſtance of a divine Power, give Sight to one born blind; for which Reaſon the Jews reckon this among the Signs of the Meſſiah, that he ſhould open the Eyes of the Blind.

But God doth not hear Sinners; (according to the Saying of the blind Man) Then whom can he hear, ſince no Man liveth, and committeth not Sin againſt God? It is true, indeed: But then the Sinners, which the poor Man may be ſuppoſed here to mean, are not thoſe who become ſuch thro' Ignorance, Weakneſs, or human Infirmity, but ſuch notorious and preſumptuous Sinners, as go on in their Impieties, with an high Hand, and an hardened Heart, of whom the Spirit of God declares; "when they ſpread forth their Hands, I will hide myſelf from them; and when they make many Prayers I will not hear," Iſa. i. 15. The Maxim, however, is here to be underſtood, not in a general, but a reſtrained Senſe, viz. That God uſeth not to honour notorious and flagitious Sinners (eſpecially when they pretend to come with a Meſſage from him) by giving them a Power to work Miracles, in order to confirm the Truth of what they ſay. For this is the Force of the poor Man's Argument, That Chriſt could not be ſuch a notorious Sinner, as he was repreſented to him; becauſe it was inconſiſtent with the Attributes of God, to honour ſuch Perſons with his Preſence and Aſſiſtance, in doing ſuch Works as no Perſons could do, without a divine Power committed to them.

That the Alluſion of a Shepherd was very proper and pertinent, with regard to the Perſons to whom our Saviour addreſſed his Diſcourſe, the Condition and Cuſtom of that Country may convince us. For the greateſt Part of the Wealth and Improvement there conſiſted in Sheep; and the Examples of Jacob and David, in particular, are Proofs, that the keeping of theſe was not uſually committed to Servants and Strangers (as it is among us) but to Men of the greateſt Quality, and Subſtance. The Children of the Family, nay, the Maſters and Owners themſelves, made it their Buſineſs; and eſteemed the looking to their Flocks a Care and Employment, in no wiſe below them. Hence the antient Prophets deſcribe the Meſſiah in the Character of a Shepherd; and our bleſſed Saviour, to ſhew that he was the Perſon intended by the Prophets, applies the ſame Character to himſelf; thereby to repreſent his Government of the Church and tender Concern for Mankind. "He ſhall feed his Flock like a Shepherd; he ſhall gather the Lambs with his Arms, and carry them in his Boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with Young," Iſa. lx. 11. "ſhall ſeek that which was loſt, and bring again that which was driven away; ſhall bind up that which was broken,

and ſtrengthen that which was ſick," Ezek. xxxiv. 16. all lively Emblems of our Lord's paſtoral Care, and the various Methods which he hath employed to accommodate his Diſpenſations to our Wants, in order to promote our eternal Salvation. And, as the Character of a Shepherd did well become our gracious Saviour, ſo there is ſome thing in the very Nature and Diſpoſition of Sheep (which appear ſo innocent and inoffenſive, ſo peaceful and gentle, ſo patient and ſubmiſſive, ſo honeſt and undeſigning) as carries a near Reſemblance to that Plainneſs and Probity, that Modeſty and Humility, that Quietneſs and Submiſſion, which are, indeed, the firſt Elements of the Chriſtian Religion, as well as the Qualifications requiſite to the Reception of it. It is to be obſerved, however, that as the Shepherd's Art in managing his Sheep, in the Eaſtern Countries, was different to what it is among us (to which Purpoſe we read of his going before, leading and calling his Sheep, and of their following and knowing his Voice; whereas our Shepherds go after and drive their Sheep) ſo theſe ſeveral Expreſſions do, in the Moral, denote our Lord's receiving into the Number of Chriſtians all thoſe humble and obedient Souls, that come to him in the Spirit of Meekneſs, not in the Cloathing, but in the real Qualities of his Sheep, and making Proviſion for their Growth in Grace, and Improvement in all Virtue and Godlineſs of Living.

According to the primary Inſtitution of God, it was the proper Province of the Sons of Levi "to teach the Children of Iſrael all the Statutes, which the Lord had ſpoken unto them, by the Hand of Moſes," Lev. x. 11. and therefore it was required, that the "Prieſts Lips ſhould preſerve Knowledge, and the People ſeek his Law at their Mouths," Mal. ii. 4, 7. but (however it came about) no ſooner did their Traditions grow in Eſteem, than the Scribes and Phariſees, not only took upon them to be the Guides and Teachers of the People, but maintained likewiſe, that others were to receive Authority to teach, from their Commiſſion and Ordination to that Office, though we no where find that they received any ſuch Authority from God, for which Reaſon our Saviour repreſents them as "a Plantation which his Father had planted," Matt. xv. 13. and bids his Diſciples "beware of their Doctrine," Matt. xvi. 12. becauſe "they taught for Doctrines of God the Commandments of Men, and made void the Commandments of God by their Traditions," Matt. xv. 6, 9.

In ſeveral of the Greek Copies, as well as the Syriac, Perſian and Gothic, the Words "before me," John x. 8. (for our Saviour ſpeaks in his own Perſon) are omitted; and ſome Criticks are of Opinion, that this Omiſſion was early, becauſe the Manichees (according to Theophylact) made no Scruple to infer from hence, that the Prophets of the Old Teſtament, had not their Miſſion from God. Our Saviour has ſufficiently eſtabliſhed the Authority of the Prophets; and by theſe Paſſages means no more, than that all thoſe, who, before

fore him, had taken upon them the Title and Quality of Meſſiah (ſuch as Theudas and Judas Galilæus, mentioned Acts v. 36, 37.) were Thieves and Robbers, becauſe they uſurped a Character which they had no Right to; and that all before him, who either had not their Commiſſion from God, or could not prove it by extraordinary Miracles (ſuch as the Author of the Rabbinical Traditions, and of all the other reigning Sects among the Jews) were far from being the true Shepherds of God's People.

His Sheep are here ſuppoſed by ſome to be his elect and peculiar Friends; and thence they infer, that Chriſt laid down his Life for them only. Now, if we reſpect the Council of God, and the Deſign of Jeſus Chriſt, nothing is more certain, than that he gave himſelf a Ranſom for all, 1 Tim. ii. 6. and "taſted Death for every Man," Heb. ii. 9. and "was a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World," 1 John ii. but then, becauſe the World can no otherwiſe lay hold on the Benefits of this Propitiation, than by believing, and being obedient to the Voice of this Shepherd, he therefore is ſaid to do this more eminently for his Sheep. The Apoſtle, I think, has determined the whole Controverſy in a few Words, "He died for all, that they who live might not live unto themſelves, but unto him who died for them."

The Gentiles our Saviour calls his other Sheep, by way of Anticipation, becauſe he foreknew that many of them (when once his Goſpel came to be tendered to them) would give it a ready Reception, be converted and baptized; and becauſe the ceremonial Law (which was the Partition-wall between the Jews and Gentiles) was ſhortly to be broken down, and the Gentiles admitted to the ſame Privileges with them that believed in his Name.

But now to return. Before the Concluſion of the Feaſt, as he was walking in Solomon's Porch, ſeveral of the Jews came and required him to tell them, in poſitive Terms, whether he was the Meſſiah or not; to which his Anſwer was, that he had already ſufficiently informed them of that, but to no Effect; that the Miracles which he wrought in his Father's Name, were an Evidence of his Miſſion; that the Reaſon why they believed him not, was, becauſe they were not of a Diſpoſition proper for his Sheep; that to ſuch as were his Sheep, and followed him, he would give eternal Life; and that none could pull them out of his Father's Hands, or his own, becauſe "he and his Father were one." Upon this laſt Expreſſion, the Jews concluded him to be a Blaſphemer, and were going to ſtone him; and though he reminded them of the many good Actions he had done for them in his Father's Name, and endeavoured to apologize for his calling himſelf the Son of God (becauſe in Scripture we find Judges and Magiſtrates frequently ſo ſtiled, and much more then might he, who was conſecrated and ſent by God, aſſume that Title) yet all this would not appeaſe their Rage, ſo that he was forced to leave the City, and went thence over Jordan to Bethabara, where

John

John had formerly baptized, where great Multitudes reſorted to him, both to hear his Inſtructions, and to be healed of their Diſeaſes; and where he made many Diſciples, becauſe the Place put the People in Mind that whatever John had reported of him was true.

While he continued in theſe Parts, a certain Perſon put a curious Queſtion to him, concerning the Number of thoſe who ſhould be ſaved: Whereupon he took occaſion to admoniſh his Hearers, "That they ought to uſe their uttermoſt Endeavours to enter in at the ſtrait Gate of Salvation, becauſe the Number of thoſe who ſhould not attain it, would be large; that they ought to do it with all Expedition, becauſe when once the Gate was ſhut, and the Means of Salvation withdrawn, all Pretences of having heard the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, and of having been converſant with him upon Earth, would gain them no Admittance, that all Workers of Iniquity ſhould be utterly excluded; and therefore the Jews, in particular, would have Cauſe to lament, when they ſhould ſee many Heathens from all Parts of the Earth, poſſeſſed of the Glory of Heaven, with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, and all the ancient Prophets; while themſelves (who were the Heirs of the Kingdom) ſhould be thruſt out, and ſo made the laſt who were once the firſt."

As he was diſcourſing in this Manner, ſome of the Phariſees, who could not longer bear with Patience the Power and Authority, which he had gained among the People, in Hopes of getting rid of him, came and ſuggeſted the Danger he was in from Herod Antipas, ſo long as he continued in Galilee, which was Part of his Dominions: But, far from betraying any Fear upon ſuch Information, he let the Phariſees know that having but a few Days longer to live, he was determined to devote them to the Relief of the Diſtreſſed, the curing Diſeaſes, and caſting out Devils; and as to Herod's Subtilty and Deſigns againſt his Life, they were altogether ſuperfluous, becauſe he foreknew that he was to ſuffer Death at Jeruſalem, which was the Place appointed (as it were) for the Slaughter of all the Prophets, and hereupon he broke out into a moſt pathetic Exclamation againſt that unhappy City, reproaching them with their killing the Meſſengers ſent from God, and then denouncing their ſad approaching Deſtruction.

Take the following Remarks on the preceding Paſſages.

Solomon's Porch conſiſted of ſome ſtately Cloiſters on the Eaſt Side of the Temples and not far from the Court of the Gentiles. It was called Solomon's, either to preſerve the Memory of that great Prince, or becauſe it was built according to the Model of that which was erected, 1 Kings vi. 3. for both in the Temple which Zorobabel, and in that which Herod rebuilt, the Plan of Solomon's was chiefly obſerved, though ſome Variations might be allowed of: And in this Porch our Saviour was walking; becauſe at this Time it was Winter, and here he found a Cover from the Injuries of the Weather;

ther; whereas, in the Summer Seaſon, it was cuſtomary with the Jews to walk in the open Courts of the Temple.

Some are of Opinion, that the Words in the Text, which we render becauſe, are not rational, or do not render a Reaſon for theſe People's Infidelity, but only intimate, that their Infidelity was conſequential to their not being the Sheep; or, in other Words, that they could not believe, becauſe they were not elected. But to obviate this, we muſt obſerve, that the Reaſon which our Lord here aſſigns for his Defect of Faith, is doubtleſs ſuch, as made it a great Crime in them; for ſure that muſt be ſuch, for which they were to die in their Sins, John viii. 24. It is therefore certain, that this Unbelief cannot be reſolved into any natural Defect of Knowledge on their Parts, nor any Act of Reprobation on God's Part, but purely to the Want of a teachable and well-diſpoſed Mind. For, were it the ſame Thing, to be one of Chriſt's Sheep, and to be predeſtinate to Faith and Salvation, the Import of our Saviour's Words muſt be this, "Ye therefore believe not, becauſe ye are not of the Number of the Elect, but of thoſe whom God hath, from all Eternity, rejected." Now, by this Account of the Matter, our Saviour would not have accuſed, but excuſed the Infidelity of the Jews, and they, with as good Reaſon, might have replied to him, "We therefore believe not, becauſe God, by his Act of Reprobation, hath ſhut the Door of Faith againſt us, and ſo our Infidelity is not to be imputed to us, but to God."

By the Words, he and his Father, is meant, one in Eſſence and Nature, one in Authority and Power, and not barely one in Will and Conſent: And that this is the genuine Signification of the Words appears, 1ſt, From the original Text, where it is not ſaid, I and my Father are one Perſon, in the Maſculine Gender, but one Thing in the Neuter. Now if that Thing be not the Divine Being, they cannot be one; for ſince the Father is confeſſed to be God, the Son cannot be one Thing with the Father, if he be not God too. 2dly, It appears from the Context, where our Saviour, having, in the preceeding Verſes, aſcribed the Preſervation of his Sheep to the Power of his Father, "None is able to pluck them out of my Father's Hands," aſcribes the ſame alſo to his own Power, "Neither ſhall any pluck them out of my Hand;" plainly intimating that his Sheep were equally ſafe in his own Hand, as in his Father's, becauſe, ſays he, "I and my Father are one." And 3dly, It appears from the Verſes which immediately follow; for when the Jews took up Stones to ſtone him, as guilty of Blaſphemy, becauſe he made himſelf God; he does not evade the Charge, by ſaying that he only conſpired with the Will of God, as all true Prophets did; but appealed to the Works, which he performed by the Power of the Father reſiding in him, which plainly carries it to an Unity of Power, not of Will only; and then St. Chryſoſtom's Inference is undeniable, that if the Power be the ſame, the Eſſence alſo is the ſame.

The

The Man who propoſed the Queſtion to our Saviour, concerning the Number of thoſe who ſhould be ſaved, had doubtleſs in his Thoughts the common Opinion of the Jews, that all Iſraelites (how much ſoever they may ſuffer in this) might have their Portion in the World to come; but this was a Queſtion of too much needleſs Curioſity for our Saviour to anſwer, becauſe it is no Part of our Concern, how many ſhall be ſaved, but only how, and by what Means we are to work out our own Salvation: And therefore he took Occaſion from hence to inſtruct the Man (and in him all others) in what might be of much more ſubſtantial Benefit to him.

This Expreſſion of the ſtrait Gate, whether it was borrowed from the Heathen Sages, or no, is extreamly like them: For Cebes tells us, that at the firſt Entrance upon a Courſe of Virtue, there is a little Gate; that after we have paſſed this Gate, there is a Narrow Aſcent; and that the Way following is rough and rugged, becauſe it is not much frequented; but that, "after we have got ten up to the Top of the Hill, the reſt is ſmooth and eaſy, free from all Obſtructions, and leading to the Regions of Felicity."

And hence we may perceive, to our Comfort, that though the Ways of Virtue and Religion are not at their firſt Entrance, ſo very agreeable, yet, in Proceſs of Time, they will be found to be "Ways of Pleaſantneſs, Chriſt's Yoke eaſy, and his Commandments not grievous."

Whether the Phariſees, who ſuggeſted to him the Danger he was in from Herod Antipas, came upon their own Account, or by the Inſtigation of Herod, is the Queſtion; if they came upon their own Account, it is certain that they came not out of any Kindneſs to our Saviour; becauſe the whole Hiſtory of the Goſpel informs us, that they were far from having any Affection for him, and therefore they muſt come with a Deſign, either to ſcare him out of Galilee, where he had been too popular for them, or to drive him into a Trap, which they had laid for him in Judea. This ſeems to be a genuine Interpretation enough of the Senſe of the Evangeliſt; and therefore, in our Hiſtory we have followed it: But ſtill it ſeems improbable, that, conſidering the preſent Circumſtances that Herod was under, he ſhould ſend theſe Meſſengers to our Saviour. He had but lately gained no good Reputation among the Jews, by murdering John, whom all the World looked upon as a Prophet: And therefore, ſeeing that our Saviour exalted John; eſpecially in the Fame and Renown of his Miracles, he was unwilling to augment the Odium, which already lay upon him, by any freſh Acts of Violence to a Perſon that was reputed a Prophet, much ſuperior to the Baptiſt, whom he had ſlain. He had got a Notion too, that the Baptiſt, at leaſt the Soul of the Baptiſt, in another Body, was riſen from the Dead, and what the Effect of the Ghoſt's haunting his Dominions might be, he could not tell; and therefore he might think it convenient to put theſe Phariſees upon ſome Expedient

dient to get our Saviour (whom poſſibly he might take for John revived) removed farther from him. However this be, it is certain, that he, or the Phariſees, or both, had a Mind to have him gone ſomewhere elſe, and that, for this Purpoſe, the Meſſage was brought him.

The Subtilty of that Prince is implied in the Anſwer which our Saviour makes to the Phariſees, and which looks, indeed, as if they had been ſent from him, "Go tell that Fox:" The Expreſſion, however, may be taken, either in a mild or in an harſh Senſe. If in a mild, it may denote that excellent Policy, wherewith this Prince conducted his Affairs all his Life-time, ſiding ſometimes with the Sadducees, juſt as it ſuited his Intereſt: But, ſuppoſe it be taken in a harſh Senſe, it will no Ways affect our Saviour's Character, nor infringe the Command of not "ſpeaking Evil of the Ruler of the People," ſince our Lord was a Prophet ſent from God, and the Office of a Prophet is, not to ſpare Kings, when they reprove their Offences.

Some are of Opinion, that becauſe the Jews had referred to the Sanhedrim, which ſat at Jeruſalem, the whole Cognizance and Trial of Prophets, therefore a Prophet was not to ſuffer out of that City; but their Interpretation ſeems to enervate our Saviour's Sentiment, whoſe Deſign certainly was to repreſent the City of Jeruſalem, ſo accuſtomed to ſhed the Blood of the Prophets, that there was ſcarce a Poſſibility for any Prophet's dying out of it.

Let us now proceed. One Sabbath-day, when Jeſus was invited by a Phariſee of ſome Diſtinction to dine with him, a Man diſtempered with a Dropſy came after him; and when ſeveral of the Company narrowly obſerved how he would behave upon this Occaſion, he firſt cured the poor Man, and then juſtified his doing ſo, by the ſame Argument he made uſe of to thoſe who reprehended him for curing the crooked Woman on the Sabbath. Obſerving, however, how eager the Gueſts were to take every one the uppermoſt Places at the Table, he endeavoured to convince them, how commendable it was, for a Man to ſeat himſelf in a Place below, rather than above his Rank and Condition, becauſe daily Experience ſhewed us, that Humility was a Virtue, which was ſo far from debaſing, that it raiſed and exalted the Perſon who practiſed it. And then, turning his Diſcourſe to the Maſter of the Houſe, whom he found too regardleſs of the Poor, and Needy, he gave him (and in him all others) the good Advice of inviting the Poor, the Blind, and the Lame, who could make no Requital, rather than his own Friends, or rich Acquaintance, who were able to return the Compliment to his Entertainments; and in ſo doing, he might depend upon a Recompence from God in the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the Hearing of theſe laſt Words, one in the Company repeated that common Saying among the Rabbins, "Bleſſed is he that ſhall eat Bread in the Kingdom of God;" whereupon our Lord took Occaſion to repreſent

the different Succeſs of the Goſpel, the Rejection of the Jews, and the Call of the Gentiles, under the Emblem of the Feaſt, to which thoſe that were invited, upon ſundry Pretences refuſed to come; ſo that the Maſter of the Houſe was obliged to ſend out into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and into the Highways and Hedges, to collect a ſufficient Complement of Gueſts, being determined that none of thoſe who were firſt invited, ſhould taſte of his Supper.

As he was going from the Phariſee's Houſe, where he dined, being attended with a mighty Concourſe of People, he began to explain to them what they were to truſt to, if they intended to become his Diſciples; that they were to renounce even ſome of their moſt lawful Affections, and prepare themſelves to undergo the moſt unjuſt Perſecutions, if they thought of making Profeſſion of his Religion; and therefore (that they might not fail in the Day of Trial) he adviſed them to conſider well before-hand, what ſuch a Profeſſion would coſt them: "For as he, who begins to build, and has not Money to accompliſh it, leaves his Work imperfect, and himſelf becomes ridiculous; or as he, who deſigns a War, and has not Men and Money enough to go through with it, had better never have engaged in it; ſo he that undertakes to be a Chriſtian, muſt reſolve to renounce all that is dear to him in this World, or elſe he will never be able to hold out."

Among the great Multitudes, that daily reſorted to our Saviour to hear his Diſcourſes, were many Publicans and Sinners. This gave great Offence to the Scribes and Phariſees, who murmured at his condeſcending Goodneſs, in ſo freely converſing and eating with ſuch infamous People. But to vindicate himſelf in this Reſpect, he compared his Conduct to that of a Man, who having an hundred Sheep, left the ninety and nine, to go in queſt of one, which was gone aſtray; to that of a Woman ſearching with all Diligence for a Piece of Silver that was loſt, and rejoicing exceedingly when ſhe found it; and to that of a Father, receiving his returning prodigal Son with all the Indications of Joy and Tenderneſs, notwithſtanding the Remonſtrances of his elder Brother: For under the Name of the elder Brother, he reproved the unjuſt Murmurings of the Phariſees, who were diſpleaſed at his entertaining Sinners, though the Salvation of ſuch was the main End of his coming into the World.

Having thus expoſed the Pride and Envy of the Phariſees, he proceeded, in the next Place, to reprove their Covetouſneſs, and at the ſame Time, to inſtruct his Diſciples, what the proper Uſe was, that they were to make of their Riches. To this Purpoſe he introduces an unjuſt Steward, who, after having abuſed his Truſt, and waſted his Maſter's Subſtance, is contriving what Proviſion to make for himſelf (which he does by abating his Maſter's Creditors in their Bills) when he came to be removed from his Place, and thereupon he teaches his Diſciples not to imitate the Injuſtice, but the Foreca ſt and Policy of this Steward, by employing

employing their earthly Riches to make them Friends in the Perſons of the Poor, that when they came to leave this tranſitory World, they might by this Means, be received into everlaſting Habitations in Heaven; and that ſo the Children of Light might become as prudent in Things relating to their Salvation, as the Children of this World were, in the Management of their temporal Affairs.

This Diſcourſe made little or no Impreſſion upon the Phariſees; and therefore (to awaken their Attention) he propounded to them the Parable of a certain rich Man living in Pride and Eaſe, and Luxury, who, after his Death, was carried into the diſmal Regions of the Damned; and of a certain poor Beggar, named Lazarus, lying at his Gate full of Sores and Ulcers, and deſiring the Fragments that came from his Table, who, when he died, was tranſported by Angels into Abraham's Boſom: "That in theſe different States, the poor Man, in Compenſation of his former Miſery, enjoyed all the Felicity that his Heart could wiſh; while the rich Man, in Puniſhment of his Luxury, and Want of Mercy to the Poor, was forced to undergo the moſt inexpreſſible Torments, without being able to procure ſo much as one Drop of Water to cool his inflamed Tongue, and without being able to prevail for the once deſpiſed Lazarus to be ſent upon a Meſſage of Admonition to his ſurviving Brethren, becauſe they had Moſes and the Prophets for their Inſtructors, or a ſtanding Revelation of the Divine Will; and if that prevailed not with them, nothing would, for the Direction of their Lives."

Here let us give ſome Explanation of what we have ſaid.

The Preſence of the dropſical Man, and its being the Sabbath-day, would involve our Saviour (as they thought) in this Difficulty, that either, by forbearing to heal at that Time, he would betray his Fear, and ſtrengthen their Superſtitions with Regard to their ritual Obſervances; or elſe, that by doing it, he muſt incur the Cenſure and Odium of a Sabbath-breaker, and a Contemner of the Law: But he, who was well aware what Spies he had upon him, ſo ordered the Matter, as to accompliſh what he ſaw fit, without any Opportunity given for his Enemies to compaſs their Ends by it.

Whether the Precept of inviting the Poor, &c. is to be underſtood in a literal Senſe, or no, may in ſome Meaſure admit of a Debate. Our Saviour, when he acted the Part of the rich Man, in feeding the Multitude, had People of the meaneſt Rank; and among theſe, the Poor, the maimed, the Lame and the Blind (who daily reſorted to him for Cure) for the Chief of his Gueſts: But moſt Men think, that theſe extraordinary Actions of his were no proper Pattern for us, in the Diſpenſation of our Charity, but that we anſwer the Intent of the Precept, if we do what is equivalent to it, in the reſpect of Charge, and more advantageous to them and their Families, by ſending them Meat or Money to refreſh them at Home.

The Words of the Text are, "When thou makeſt a Dinner or a Supper, call not thy Friends, nor thy Brethren, neither thy Kinſmen, nor thy rich Neighbours." It is to be obſerved, in our expounding of Scripture, that as comparative Particles are ſometimes uſed in a negative Senſe (for ſo we find the chief Prieſts moving the People, that Pilate ſhould releaſe Barabbas to them, i. e. that he ſhould releaſe Barabbas, and not Jeſus) ſo negative Particles are oft uſed in a Senſe comparative, as when we read in Proverbs viii. 10. "Receive my Inſtructions and not Silver," and in Joel ii. 13. "Rend your Hearts, and not your Garments," the Meaning is, rather than Silver, or your Garments; in like Manner as here, "Call not thy Friends, nor Brethren," i. e. be not ſo much concerned to call them as the Poor. For it can hardly be thought, that our Saviour's Intent in this Precept was abſolutely to forbid all Invitations of our Neighbours and Acquaintance; but his only Meaning is, that we ſhould not invite them, out of a Proſpect of a Compenſation from them again, which is making a Kind of Traffick with our Generoſity; but, inſtead of this, that we ſhould expend our Money in the Exerciſe of Charity to ſuch as are in no Condition to make us a Retribution.

From the enſuing Parable it appears, that the Kingdom of God here does not ſignify the Kingdom of Heaven; in its moſt exalted Senſe; but only the Kingdom of the Meſſiah, whereof this carnal Jew here ſpeaks, according to the received Senſe of his Nation, as of a glorious temporal Kingdom, in which the Jews ſhould lord it over the Gentile World, enjoy their Wealth, and be provided with all thoſe earthly Bleſſings and Delights, in which they placed their Felicity.

If we compare the Emblem of a Feaſt, repreſenting the Rejecting of Jews, and the Call of the Gentiles, with the Paſſages in Matt. xxii. 2. we may be ſatisfied, that by the Kingdom of Heaven is here repreſented the Goſpel Diſpenſation; and this, as it miniſters true Plenty and Pleaſure, all that Men can want, and all they can wiſh, to render them perfectly happy, is compared to a Feaſt. The Bounty and infinite Love of Almighty God are ſignified by the Greatneſs of that Supper; and the Multitudes bidden to it. The firſt Bidding implies all the previous Notices of the Meſſiah, which by the Law and the Prophets were intended to prepare the Jews for the Reception of him and his Doctrine, The ſecond Bidding, when all Things were ready, ſeems to import all that Jeſus did, and taught and ſuffered for their Converſion and Salvation, and all the Teſtimonies and Exhortations of his Apoſtles and other Preachers of the Goſpel, to the ſame Purpoſe. The Excuſes ſent for their Abſence, are the Prejudices and Paſſions, and worldly Intereſts, which did not only hinder thoſe Jews from coming into the Faith, but diſpoſed them likewiſe to treat all Attempts to win them over with the utmoſt Obſtinacy and Contempt. The Gueſts brought in from Abroad to ſupply their Places, are the Gentile World, to whom (after that the "Jews had thruſt it from them") the ſubſequent

quent Tenders of this Grace and Salvation were made: And the declaring that none of thoſe, who were bidden, ſhould taſte of this Supper, denote the giving thoſe Jews over to a reprobate Senſe, and leaving them under that Infidelity and Perverſeneſs, in which they continue hardened to this very Day.

It was a Cuſtom of the Jewiſh Doctors to lay down before their Proſelytes what Inconveniencies would attend upon their Precepts; and in Conformity to this, our Saviour acquaints his Diſciples with two Things, that would be a Means to deter them from embracing his Religion, viz. the Difficulty of the Duties that would be required of them; and the Greatneſs of the Sufferings to which they would be expoſed.

The Meaning of the Words in the Text, "If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren, and Siſter, yea, and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple," in this Place is not, that a Man ſhould, properly ſpeaking hate his Father and Mother: For certainly our Bleſſed Lord, who enjoins us to love our Enemies, would never make it our Duty to hate our Parents: And therefore the Word Miſein, (which is an Hebraiſm) muſt neceſſarily here be taken in a lower Senſe, viz. to love or eſteem leſs, in the ſame Manner as it is ſaid of Leah, that Jacob hated her, Gen. xxix. 31. i. e. did not love her ſo well as he did Rachael: For that this and no more, is here the Import of the Expreſſion is plain from a parallel Text, "He that loveth Father and Mother, more than me, is not worthy of me."

They, whom the Scriptures in general, and the New Teſtament in particular, characterize by the Name of Sinners, are the habitual and obdurate, the great and eminent Offenders.

The Scribes and Phariſees looked upon the Publicans as unfit to be converſed with upon any Account, even though it was to reclaim them from their evil Courſes. Our Saviour had told them, that he converſed among ſuch People, as their Phyſician, and not as their Companion; and that, therefore, his proper Buſineſs was among ſuch Patients: But this Apology would not ſilence their Murmuring, becauſe their Opinion was, that God had caſt off all Care of them, and never intended to grant them Repentance unto Life.

Here Chriſt ſets ninety and nine juſt Perſons in Oppoſition to one Sinner; not that it is ſo in Proportion; for there are very few who live according to the Rule that is preſcribed them; but becauſe, even upon a Suppoſition that it were ſo, ſuch is the Value of our immortal Souls, that great Care and Pains ought to be taken even for the Sake of one.

A Sheep, when once it has ſtrayed away, is a Creature remarkably ſtupid and heedleſs: It goes wandering on, without any Power or Inclination to return back, though each Moment it is in Danger of becoming a Sacrifice to every Beaſt of Prey that meets it. And ſuch, in Truth, is the Condition

of

of People addicted to Vice, when they have broken out of God's Fold, and forſaken the pleaſant Paſtures which he provides for them. They grow careleſs and inconſiderate, and are expoſed to Snares and Temptations every Moment. They are hardened by Cuſtom; are depraved in their Affections and Judgments; are neither diſpoſed to grow wiſer, nor of themſelves capable of conquering inveterate Habits of Vice, though they ſhould, now and then, ſhew ſome good Inclination to attempt it.

By the Compariſon of a loſt Piece of Money, we are given to underſtand, that God eſteems the Souls of Men precious, and reckons them among his Wealth, and his Treaſures: And his, indeed, they are; made and formed by his own Hand; impreſſed with his own Image and Superſcription; and from that Stamp, which carries a Reſemblance to the great King of the whole World, deriving all their Currency and Value. But when they abandon God's Laws, and forſake the divine and rational Life; a Life of Goodneſs and Wiſdom, renounced for one of Senſuality and Madneſs, and Miſchief, then they are loſt; loſt to themſelves, and loſt to God. Then this Coin is debaſed, the Impreſſion obliterated and gone, and the Piece of Money, as to the Worth and Uſe of it, is, in a Manner, as if it were no longer in Being.

The Parable of the prodigal Son is deſervedly reckoned a Maſter-piece, and what cannot be paralleled by any of the Apologues or allegorical Writings of Heathen Authors. It is adorned and beautified with the moſt glowing Colours, and lively Similitudes. It is carried on and conducted with admirable Wiſdom and Proportion, in the Parts, as well as in the Whole, and there is ſo exact a Relation, between the Things preſented, and the Repreſentations of them, that the moſt elevated Underſtanding will admire, and the loweſt Capacity diſcover the excellent and moſt uſeful Moral, that lies under ſo thin a Veil.

There is a good deal in this and the following Parable, that alludes to the Notions of the Jewiſh Rabbins, and their Manner of expreſſing them. "The Fruits of the Earth (ſays one of their Doctors) are like a Table ſpread in an Houſe; the Owner of this is God: Man, in this World, is as it were, the Steward of this Houſe; if he behaves himſelf well, he will find Favour in the Eyes of his Lord; if otherwiſe, he will be removed from his Stewardſhip." Kimchi on Iſa. xl. And ſo the Scope of this following Parable ſeems to be this,—That we are to look upon ourſelves, not as Lords of the good Things of this Life, as though we might uſe them at our Pleaſure, but only as Stewards, who muſt be faithful in the Adminiſtration of them. The Parables, indeed, make Mention of no other Goods but thoſe of Riches; but we muſt not therefore imagine, that rich Men only ſtand in the Capacity of Stewards, ſince every Advantage of Nature or of Grace, as well as thoſe of Fortune, or Life, our Health, our Strength, our Wit and Parts, our Knowledge natural and acquired, our Leiſure,

Leiſure, our every Ability, our every Opportunity, our every Inclination to do well, are all our Maſter's Goods; all intruſted with us; all capable of benefiting others, and will all, at laſt, be brought to our Account.

The Words in the Text are, " Make yourſelves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs." Now Mammon or Mommona, is a Syriac Word, and properly denotes Riches or a Treaſure. It comes from a Hebrew Root, which ſignifies to be hid; and is therefore thought to comprehend, not only Gold, Silver, and other Metals that are hid in the Bowels of the Earth, but Stores likewiſe of Corn, Wine, and Oil (a great Part of the Riches of the Eaſtern People) which they often buried in ſubterraneous Caverns, to conceal them from their Enemies. Theſe are called the " Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs," becauſe they frequently occaſion much Iniquity in the World, and are often acquired by very indirect Means; but our Lord, by this Expreſſion, muſt not be ſuppoſed to command Alms to be given of that which is gotten by Fraud or Injuſtice, becauſe ſuch Charity can never be acceptable to God. No, the Duty of thoſe Men who have acquired Wealth unrighteouſly, is to make Reſtitution to the Perſons they have injured; if theſe be dead, then to their Heirs or Executors; and the Poor are only then the Receivers of the Fruits of Injuſtice, when a Perſon is conſcious that he has been unjuſt, but does not know the Perſons to whom he has been ſo.

Whether this Repreſentation, which our Saviour here makes of the different Fates of the rich and the poor Man, be a Parable or a real Hiſtory, is a Matter, wherein ſeveral Commentators are not agreed. We are told, however, that in ſeveral Manuſcripts, both Greek and Latin, there are theſe Words in the Beginning of the 19th Verſe, " He ſpake to them another Parable; and that this very Parable is in the Gemara Babylonicum, from whence it is cited by the learned Sheringham, in his Preface to his Ioma; as indeed, if we look into the Circumſtances of it, ſuch as the rich Man's " lifting up his Eyes in Hell," and ſeeing Lazarus in Abraham's Boſom; his Diſcourſe to Abraham; his Complaint, of being tormented with Flames, and his Deſire that Lazarus might be ſent to cool his Tongue, or at leaſt to convert his ſurviving Brethren, If (together with the great Gulph that is fixed between the two Places of Bliſs and Torment) we do but conſider the Particulars, I ſay we muſt needs conclude, that, as they cannot be underſtood of any departed Soul, in a literal Senſe, they muſt be an allegorical Repreſentation of Things inviſible, by Terms, in ſome Meaſure, ſuitable to the Opinion of the Jews concerning the State of Souls after Death.

Lazer, which, according to moſt, is but a Contraction from Eleazar, is the very ſame with Aniachad, a poor Man, in the Gemara, and properly ſignifies one without Help, or rather one that has God for his Help: But, in the Times of our Bleſſed Saviour, we may obſerve, that it was a common Name among

among the Jews, and given to the Men of ſome Diſtinction; as we find it was to the Brother of Martha and Mary.

The Garden of Eden and Paradiſe, the Throne of Glory, and Abraham's Boſom, were common Expreſſions among the Jewiſh Doctors, to denote a future State of Felicity; for ſo Joſephus, in the Diſcourſe of the Maccabees, ſays of good Men, that "they are gathered to the Region of the Patriarchs, and that Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, do receive their Souls:" And they tell us farther, that the Souls of ſuch Men are carried thither by Angels; for ſo the Targum on Cant. iv. 12. ſays, that "no Man hath Power to enter into the Garden of Eden, but the Juſt, whoſe Souls are carried thither by the Hands of good Angels." Our Commentators, however, have perceived ſomething peculiar in the Phraſe of Abraham's Boſom. They imagine, that the Jewiſh Notion of Paradiſe was, a Place abounding with Delights, and perpetual Feaſtings, where Abraham, the great Founder of their Nation, enjoys the uppermoſt Place at the Table; and while all his Children ſit down with him, ſome at a nearer and ſome at a farther Diſtance from him, he who has the Honour to recline upon his Boſom (as Lazarus is here repreſented) is in a higher Degree of Felicity than ordinary. But others deride all this Notion, and aſſert, that Abraham's Boſom, was ſo called, not from any Poſture of Gueſts at Table, but from little Children, whom their tender Parents do ſometimes take in their Boſom, and ſometimes cauſe them to ſleep there. For ſince, thoſe that die in the Lord, ſay they, are ſaid to ſleep or reſt from their Labours, where can they be ſaid to enjoy this Reſt or Sleep better than in the Boſom of the Father of the Faithful.

A good deal of this, concerning the Torments of the rich Man, is to be taken in a figurative Senſe; but our Saviour poſſibly inſerted this Paſſage in the Parable, on Purpoſe to ſtrike at a vain Imagination, which ſome of the Jews were apt to entertain, viz. "That Hell-Fire had no Power over the Sinners of Iſrael, becauſe Abraham and Iſaac came down thither to fetch them from thence;" which could not fail of being effectually confuted, when they heard Abraham, as it were, with his own Mouth, declaring that no Help was to be expected from him, when once they were got into that Place.

Moſes and the Prophets comprehend all the ſeveral Diſpenſations of God's Mercy, which are expreſſed either in the Old or New Teſtament. They ſignify the whole revealed Will of God, and whatever he hath ſet down therein, as neceſſary to our attaining eternal Life and Happineſs. Whatever Doctrine can be proved out of them we are bound to embrace without a new Miracle; as on the other hand, whatever Doctrine is inconſiſtent with them, we muſt reject, though an Angel from Heaven, or one from the Dead, ſhould come and preach it to us.

One riſing from the Dead certainly could not do it, becauſe he could come with no greater Authority, deliver no better Motives to Repentance, nor give them

them any greater Aſſurance of the Truth of what he ſaid, than what they had already. That a Reſurrection from the Dead was not ſufficient to convince them, is plain from hence, that our Saviour had raiſed Lazarus, and yet the Phariſees were not the more obedient to his Doctrine. Nay, though they had the moſt clear Proofs of his own Prophets, and their Guards that kept the Sepulchre; from the Teſtimony of their own Senſes, of the Apoſtles, and five hundred Witneſſes at once; yet all this was inſufficient to reclaim that wicked Generation from their Iniquity, or to move them to Repentance.

Here let us reſume our Story.

Of the great Numbers of People, who attended our Lord, wherever he went; ſome came out of Neceſſity, others out of Curioſity; ſome out of a Spirit of Devotion, and others out of a Spirit of Captiouſneſs, and with an Intent to entangle him in his Diſcourſe. Of their laſt Sort were the Scribes and Phariſees, who taking the Queſtion of Divorces to be ſomewhat intricate, put it to our Saviour; but he, limited the Permiſſion of ſuch Separations to the Caſe of the Adulterer only, reminding them of that ſtrict and natural Union between Man and Wife, which God had appointed at their firſt Creation, and was not, conſequently, to be diſannulled by any human Inſtitution. Here the Phariſees, thinking they had got the Advantage of the Argument, objected the Precept of Moſes, wherein he permitted the Huſband, in many Caſes, to give a Bill of Divorce to the Wife; but to this our Saviour replied, That, though under the Moſaical Diſpenſation, God, knowing their Obſtinacy and perverſe Inclinations, allowed a Diſpenſation in this Point, by tolerating Divorces; yet, according to the original Inſtitution of Marriage, it was not ſo; and therefore, to reduce the Matter to its primary Eſtabliſhment, he determined that all Divorces, for any leſs Cauſe, than that of Fornication, were illegal, and on both Sides attended with Adultery. This, when ſome of the Diſciples heard, and (ſince the Engagement was ſo rigorous) began to expreſs their Diſlike of Marriage, our Lord, allowed it to be true, that in thoſe who had the Gift of Continency, a ſingle Life was more conducible towards the Attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven; but that thoſe, who had it not, and thought proper to marry, ought, by all Means, to adhere to the firſt Inſtitution.

After this, he began to remind his Diſciples of ſeveral Things he had inſtructed them in before, viz. of the Impoſſibility of preventing Scandals and Offences; of the Duty of forgiving our Brother his repeated Tranſgreſſion, of the Neceſſity and Efficacy of Faith, in order to be heard in our Requeſts to God; of Humility in the Performance of our Duty, becauſe at the beſt we are but unprofitable Servants; and, eſpecially, of Humility in our Addreſſes to God, of which he gave them a parabolical Inſtance, in the different Behaviour of a Phariſee and a Publican; the Phariſee vaunting out his own Praiſe at his Devotion, and preferring himſelf before all others;

but the Publican, in a dejected Heart, confeſſing his Sins, and imploring God's Mercy; and yet the latter (according to our Lord's Judgement) departed more acceptable to God than the other; becauſe the divine Decree is, "That Pride ſhould be abaſed, and Humility exalted."

The Phariſees, who waited for the Coming of the Meſſiah, had drawn up a romantick Scheme, of his appearing with the utmoſt Glory, as a temporal Prince came, came about this Time, and demanded of him, when the Kingdom of God, whereof he had told them ſo much, was to appear? To which he gave them in Anſwer, That it ſhould not appear with any Pomp or Splendor, as they vainly imagined: and that, in Truth, it was already begun among them, though they had no Preception of it: And then returning to his Diſciples, he gave them a Caution not to be deluded by falſe Prophets, who would pretend to ſhew them the Kingdom of God where it was not; that before he could enter into his glorified State, he was to ſuffer many Things, and be rejected by the Jews; but that, after his Death, he would give inconteſtible Proofs of his Power and Dominion, by the wonderful Propagation of his Goſpel, and by the ſpeedy and amazing Vengeance which he intended to take on that Nation: And therefore he exhorted them not to imitate the Security of the People in Noah's Time, or of the Inhabitants of Sodom, nor to expreſs any Concern for the Deſtruction of their Country, as did Lot's Wife, but to uſe their utmoſt Care and Diligence (when they ſaw the Roman Armies advancing) not to be involved in the general Calamity: And becauſe, in involving ſome, and preſerving others, there would be much of God's diſtinguiſhing Providence concerned, he therefore exhorted them to pray without fainting, or being diſcouraged at any Thing; and, to this Purpoſe, propounded a Parable of a poor Woman, who, by her continued Importunity alone, prevailed with an unjuſt Judge to vindicate her Wrongs, though he feared neither God nor Man.

The Jews, at this Time, were divided in their Opinions as to the Matter of their Divorces. Some of them who followed the Sentiments of the School of Shammah, held that the Wife was to be put away only for the Crime of Adultery, becauſe Moſes directs, that this might be done, in caſe the Huſband had found ſome Uncleanneſs in her, Deut. xxiv. 1. But others, who adhered to the Notions of the School of Hillel (and they were by much the greater Number) mentioned on the contrary, that this was permitted to be done for any Cauſe whatever, becauſe in the ſame Verſe it is expreſſed, that if ſhe found not Grace in her Huſband's Eyes, ſhe was divorceable. This was the Queſtion which the Phariſees brought to our Saviour, thinking that he muſt have decided it, either againſt the Law of Moſes, or againſt the Determination of one of theſe two famous Schools, and, one Way or other, have become offenſive to the People; but our Saviour

viour evaded all this, by reducing Matrimony to its original Inſtitution.

This is a Matter, which the Heathens themſelves ſeemed not unacquainted with; and therefore it is ſaid in Hierocles, that "Nature prompts us to Marriage, in that ſhe hath made us ſo, that two ſhould live together, and have one common Work to beget Children;" and that Tale in Plato, in his Convivium, "That Man, at firſt, was made Male and Female, and that, though Jupiter cleft them aſunder, there was a natural Love towards one another, and an Inclination to heal human Nature, by making one again of two," ſeems only to be a Corruption of the Account in Geneſis of Eve's being made out of Adam's Rib.

The Phariſees, in their Reply to our Saviour, ſeem to intimate, that the Lawfulneſs of Divorces was founded upon a divine Command; "Why then did Moſes command to give her a Bill of Divorcement, and put her away?" But Moſes no where commands, but only, in ſome Caſes, permits the doing of this; nor is the Deſign of the whole Precept to give any Encouragement to this Practice, but only to provide, that (in caſe Men will be ſo perverſe and hard-hearted, as to turn away their Wives upon every ſlight Occaſion) the Thing might be done in a proper and public Manner, not by Word of Mouth, but by Bill of Divorcement, delivered in Form, that, when the Woman is thus diſmiſſed, ſhe may not be quite ruined, but left at her Liberty to become another Man's Wife, Deuteronomy xxiv. 2.

But here the Queſtion is, Whether this Diſpenſation excuſed the common Divorces among the Jews (which our Saviour looks upon as an Infringement of the primitive Inſtitution of Marriage) from all Sin, eſpecially that of Adultery, in the Sight of God? It is granted indeed, that theſe Divorces were contrary to the Equity and genuine Intention of God's firſt Inſtitution of Marriage, but then it muſt be added, that God, by his Servant Moſes, had diſpenſed with his own Inſtitution; that under ſuch his Diſpenſation, there could be no Prohibition; and that, where there was no Prohibition, there could be no Tranſgreſſion; unleſs we can ſuppoſe, that God could forbid, and permit the ſame Thing, at the ſame Time. Our Saviour indeed, upon this Occaſion, preſcribes a new Law, which had not before obtained among the Jews; he retracts the Diſpenſation that Moſes had given; he reduces Marriage to its primitive Inſtitution; and, except in Caſes of Adultery, allows of no Divorces, but accounts them all null and invalid: However, under the Moſaick Diſpenſation it was not ſo. From the Permiſſion, given to the Women, when they were thus divorced, to be married to others, it is evident, that theſe Divorces quite diſſolved the Bond of Matrimony, otherwiſe we muſt ſay, that God gave theſe Women, when they married again, a Toleration to live in a State of Adultery, and ſo, at long-run, the whole Commonwealth of Judea muſt, by a divine Permiſſion, have been filled with Adultery and a ſpu-

rious Offspring, which is incongruous to the Wisdom and Purity of Almighty God to imagine.

The Pharisee's Temper is sufficiently discovered in the Form of his Prayer: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican." This Stile is insolent and boasting; that of a Herald, rather than a Supplicant; and does not so much render God his Praises, as proclaim his own. But, admitting this lofty Opinion of his own Excellencies to be never so just, yet what Warrant or Privilege could he have, to disparage and vilify his Brethren? I am not as other Men: What could be more fulsome Vanity, than thus to set himself off, as an Exception to a whole World at once? Or even as this Publican: To break that bruised Reed, and with scornful Reproaches, to fall foul on a wounded Soul, whose penitent Sorrow called for the Compassion of every Stander-by. The Publican, quite contrary to all his Expressions, in all his Deportment, speaks nothing but Shame, and Confusion, the tendereſt Contrition, and most profound Humility. He stands afar off, as not presuming upon a nearer Approach to the Presence of so holy a Majesty. He lifts not up so much as his Eyes to Heaven, but, by the Guilt and Melancholy of his Countenance, takes to himself the ignominious Titles, so liberally bestowed by his scornful Companion. He smites upon his Breast, as conscious of the Pollutions lodged there; looks not abroad, but confines his Thoughts to his own Misery; alledges nothing in his own Behalf, no Mixture of Good to mitigate the Evil of his past Life; feels no Comfort, seeks no Refuge, except in the Mercy of a forgiving God; brings no Motive to incline that Mercy, but a sorrowful Sense of his own Unworthiness, and an humble Hope in God's undoubted Goodness: And therefore upon this, this Saving, this only supporting Attribute, he casts himself entirely, with a "God be merciful to me a Sinner."

Whether the Pharisees Question to our Saviour, "When the Kingdom of God should appear," was put in Derision, because, in his Discourses, he had so often mentioned the Kingdom of God, or in sober Seriousness, because, at this Time, they were in strong Expectations of the Coming of the Messiah, and his erecting a secular Kingdom among them, is not so easy a Matter to determine. Their contemptible Opinion of Christ inclines some to think the former: but their generally received Opinion about the Messiah gives some Countenance to the latter: But, in whatsoever Sense they intended the Question, our Saviour's Answer perfectly fits them. Only we may observe, that, by the Kingdom of God here, the Pharisees, and our Saviour, meant two very different Things: The Pharisees, a flourishing Kingdom, wherein the Messiah was to reduce all other Nations under the Jewish Yoke; but our Saviour, a Kingdom of Wrath and Vengeance, which he designed to exercise even upon the Jews themselves; and withal a spiritual Kingdom,

dom, which he deſigned to erect in the Hearts of Men by the kindly Operations of his Word and Spirit, when his Goſpel ſhould be more fully propagated: For this is the Meaning of that Compariſon, "As the Lightning that lightneth out of the one Part under Heaven, ſhineth unto the other Part under Heaven, ſo alſo ſhall the Son of Man be in his Day," ver. 24. He had told them, that the Kingdom of God was already come among them, and had appeared in the Purity of his Doctrine, and the Miracles which he had wrought to confirm it; tho' not in that glaring Light, as to make them take a proper Notice of it; and here he tells them farther, that after his Reſurrection, it would ſhine with ſuch a freſh and glorious Brightneſs, by the Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt on his Diſciples, as would render it equal to the Splendor of the Sun ſhining from one Part of Heaven to the other, and cauſe it to be propagated, almoſt as quick as Lightning, through the World; and that then this Son of Man, ſo ſcornfully rejected by them, would alſo appear ſuddenly, and glorioufly, to revenge upon them their Infidelity, and the Affronts which they had offered to him.

The Diſtinction between falſe Chriſt's and falſe Prophets is, that the former took upon them to be Chriſt, and came under that Name; the latter were ſuch as promiſed and foretold falſe Things. Amongſt the Number of falſe Chriſts, who appeared in the Time prefixed by our Saviour, i. e. between his Reſurrection and the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, are generally reckoned, Doſitheus, who (according to Origen) gave it out, that he was the Chriſt, whom Moſes had foretold; Simon Magus, who bewitched the People by his Sorceries, and made himſelf paſs for "the great Power of God," Acts viii. 9, 10. and alſo many more, whom the Time of the Advent of their King Meſſiah (as Joſephus expreſſes it) prevailed with to ſet up for King. Among the Number of falſe Prophets, who appeared in this Period, are likewiſe reckoned Theudas (not the Perſon mentioned, Acts v. 36.) who, in the Government of Fadus, promiſed his Followers, that he would divide the River Jordan (as it was in the Days of Joſhua and Elias) and give them a free Paſſage. The Egyptian Jew, who, in the Government of Fælix, drew thirty Thouſand after him to the Mount of Olives, where he promiſed, by his Prayers, to make the Walls of Jeruſalem (as thoſe of Jericho once did) fall flat to the Ground; thence drive the Roman Forces; and there fix the Seat of his Empire: A certain Magician, who, in the Government of Feſtus, led great Numbers of Jews into the Deſert, and promiſed them a Deliverance from all their Troubles; and ſeveral others, who taught the Jews, even to the laſt, to expect Help and Deliverance. Good Reaſon therefore had our Bleſſed Saviour to caution his Diſciples againſt all ſuch Pretenders to a divine Miſſion, ſince, according to his Prediction, and, as Joſephus expreſſes it, "the Land, at this Time, was quite over-run with Impoſtors and Seducers,

Seducers, who drew the People after them in Shoals;" though the Roman Governors were ſo very ſevere, that there "hardly a Day paſſed, without the Execution of ſome of them."

Lot's Wife, inſtead of making Haſte to ſave herſelf, as the Angel had commanded her, out of a vain Curioſity, muſt needs look back, either regretting what ſhe had left behind her in the City, or concerned for thoſe who were deſtroyed in it, till ſhe was overtaken with the Flame, and changed into a Statue of Salt, or into the Condition of a Corps ſalted and embalmed, which continued, as a Monument of her Diſobedience, for many Ages after. And, in like Manner, if any of our Saviour's Diſciples neglected the Advice, which he here gave them, and continued in Jeruſalem, when the Roman Army had cloſely inveſted it, they, very likely, were involved in the common Deſtruction.

The Words in the Text, "Whereſoever the Body or the Carcaſe is, there will the Eagles be gathered together," Mat. xxiv. 28. Luke xvii. 37. Theſe Words, which our Saviour here makes proverbial, ſeem to have been borrowed from the Paſſage in Job, where he ſpeaks of the Eagle in theſe Words; "She dwelleth, and abideth on the Rock, upon the Crag of the Rock, and the ſtrong Place, from thence ſhe ſeeketh the Prey, and her Eyes behold afar off. Her young ones alſo ſuck up Blood, and where the Slain are, there is ſhe," Job xxxix. 28, &c. Upon the Account of the Swiftneſs, the Strength, and Invincibleneſs of this Bird, no doubt it was, that the Romans made the Eagle their Enſign in War; and therefore our Saviour, by making uſe of this Expreſſion, gives us to underſtand, that the Romans would come upon the Jews with a ſudden Deſtruction; ſurround them ſo that there ſhould be no eſcaping their Hands; and in whatſoever Country they found them, there put them all to the Sword. For the Eagle, mentioned in Job, is by Tranſlators rendered by a Word, which ſignifies a Vulture, a Bird conſecrated to Mars, becauſe it loves to feed upon Man's Fleſh, and therefore, by a kind of natural Inſtinct, travels along with Armies, in Expectation of the Carcaſſes that fall there. Nor is it an uncommon Thing for the Prophets to expreſs the Day of God's Vengeance under the Idea of a Feaſt, which he had prepared for the ravenous Birds and Beaſts of the Field; for thus ſaith the Lord, "Speak unto every feathered Fowl, and to every Beaſt of the Field, aſſemble yourſelves and come, gather yourſelves on every Side to my Sacrifice, that I do ſacrifice for you, even a great Sacrifice upon the Mountains of Iſrael, that ye may eat Fleſh, and drink Blood, even the Fleſh of the Mighty, and the Blood of the Princes of the Earth," Ezek. xxxix. 17, 18. Vid. Iſa. xxxiv. 6. and Jer. xlvi. 10.

Though it were Blaſphemy to think, that God acts upon the ſame Motives with the unjuſt Judge, in the Parable, yet this we may learn from the Nature of the Parable, that, if a Perſon, who neither fears God, nor regards Man, who hath neither any Senſe of Religion

gion or Humanity, may be ſuppoſed to be ſo far prevailed upon by the earneſt Prayer of a miſerable neceſſitous Creature, as to grant the Requeſt made to him, and to adminiſter Relief to the Supplicant, merely upon the Continuance and Importunity of the Petitions, that are put up; how much more ought we to think, that God, who is infinite Goodneſs itſelf; who is always kind and bountiful to his Creatures, who delights to do them Good, even without their deſiring it, and who is able to do them Good, with much leſs Pains, than they can requeſt it; how much more ought we to think, I ſay, that this God, upon our earneſt and hearty Prayer to him (eſpecially if we be importunate, and perſevering in our Devotions) will return us a kind Anſwer, and grant us ſuch Supplies, ſuch Protection, or Aſſiſtance, as ſhall be needful for us.

We now proceed. Shortly after this Jeſus croſſed the River Jordan into Perea, where he was followed again by vaſt Multitudes of People, whom he both taught, and cured of ſuch Diſtempers as they had, inſomuch that ſeveral of the Company, perceiving how ready he was to do Good to all that came unto him, brought their Children with them, in order to partake of his divine Benediction; but his Diſciples, thinking it below the Dignity of their Maſter to be diſturbed, and interrupted by Infants, at firſt refuſed Admittance to thoſe who brought them; until Jeſus having reproved them for ſo doing, and withal recommended the Innocence and Simplicity of theſe Babes, as a Pattern for their Imitation, commanded them all to be introduced, and, taking them up in his Arms, he laid his Hands upon them, and bleſſed them, and ſo departed from the Place where this Tranſaction happened.

As he was on his Journey, a young Perſon of Diſtinction, who was very rich and wealthy, deſired to know of him, what he was to do in order to attain eternal Life. Our Saviour propoſed to him the Obſervation of the Moral Law, and remitted him, in particular, to the Commandments of the Second Table, as a certain Sign of his keeping thoſe of the Firſt; but when the young Gentleman told him, that all theſe he had made his Study to obſerve from his Youth, and our Lord, who knew his covetous Temper, and was willing to touch the ſecret Sore of his Mind, told him, that if he aimed at Perfecton in Religion, his only Way would be, to ſell his Eſtate, and give it to the Poor (in Hopes of a greater Treaſure in Heaven) and to come, and be one of his Diſciples; the young Man went away very penſive and melancholy, being loth to part with his preſent Poſſeſſions for any Treaſure in Reverſion. Whereupon our Lord, turning to his Diſciples, began to declare, what an inſurmountable Obſtacle, Riches, without the Grace of God, were to any Man's Salvation, and that " it was eaſier (according to the Hebrew Proverb) for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:" At which

which Expreſſion when his Diſciples were not a little ſtartled, to remove their Fears, he let them know that the Salvation of the Rich (though a Matter of ſome Difficulty) was not impoſſible with God, who could change the Hearts and Affections of Men, as he pleaſed.

When the Apoſtles heard their Maſter bidding the young Man, " ſell all, and give to the Poor, and follow him," and promiſing him, for a Reward, a " Treaſure in Heaven," they began to think, that poſſibly, it might be their Care, and the Promiſe, in like Manner, concern them; and therefore, when (in the Name of the reſt) Peter deſired to know of him, what Reward they were to expect, who had actually relinquiſhed all, and followed him; his Reply was, that, at the general Reſurrection, " when himſelf ſhould be ſeated upon his Throne of Glory, they alſo ſhould ſit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael;" and that not only they, but all others likewiſe, who, for his, and the Goſpel's Sake, ſhould quit any worldly Advantages or Poſſeſſions, ſhould receive ſuch Comforts in this World, as would vaſtly ſurpaſs their Loſſes, and, in the World to come, eternal Life: But then, to ſhew them that ſuch high Rewards proceeded from the Bounty of Heaven, and no other Title, he repreſented the Freedom of God in the Diſtribution of his Favours, under the Emblem of a certain Maſter of a Family, ſending Labourers into his Vineyard, ſome ſooner, and ſome later, by giving them all the ſame Wages; wherein though he ſeemed kind to ſome, yet was he unjuſt to none, becauſe he paid them all according to his Agreement, and (having done ſo) was then certainly left to his Option, whom to make the Objects of his Liberality.

Here it may be proper to ſtop, to take a Review of this Period of our Story.

The Word Perea is derived from the Greek, which ſignifies beyond, and intimates the Country beyond Jordan, or on the Eaſt-ſide of that River. It was bounded (according to Joſephus) to the Weſt, by Jordan; to the Eaſt, by Philadelphia; to the North, by Pella; and to the South, by Macheron; and was a fruitful Country, abounding with Pines, Olive-Trees, Palm-Trees, and other Plants, that grow up and down in the Fields, in great Plenty and Perfection; and, in the exceſſive Heats, was well watered, and refreſhed with Springs, and Torrents from the Mountains.

The Parents, who brought their Children to Chriſt, were doubtleſs ſuch as believed him to be a Prophet ſent from God; and were perſuaded, that the Touch, or Impoſition of his Hands would be of great Benefit to them, both to draw down a Bleſſing from Heaven upon them, and to preſerve them from Diſeaſes, which they ſaw him cure in Perſons more advanced in Years. We may obſerve therefore, that though theſe Children were no more than Infants (as appears by our Saviour's taking them up in his Arms, Mark x. 16.) yet their Parents thought them

them capable of ſpiritual Bleſſings, and of receiving Advantage by our Saviour's Prayers. They however might bring them, with no farther Intent, than what is cuſtomary among the Jews even now, when they preſent their Children, to any of their famous Doctors, viz. to obtain his Bleſſing; but by the Reaſon which our Saviour gives for their Admiſſion into the Kingdom of Heaven, it appears, that he perceived ſomething in them (beſides their being Emblems of Humility) that qualified them to come unto him; and what could that be, but a Fitneſs to be dedicated to the Service of God, and to enter into Covenant with him early (as the Jewiſh Children did) by the Rite of Baptiſm (which was in Inſtitution) even as the others did by that of Circumciſion?

We muſt not imagine, becauſe our Saviour refers the young Man (who deſired to know what he muſt do to attain eternal Life) to the Precepts of the ſecond Table only, that therefore they are of more Obligation to us, than thoſe of the firſt; or that by performing them alone, we may attain eternal Life: Our Lord has elſewhere determined, that the greateſt Command of all, is, " to love the Lord our God with all our Heart;" and here he inſtances in thoſe of the ſecond Table, not only becauſe the Love of our Neighbour is an excellent Evidence of our Love to God, but becauſe the Phariſees (of which Sect very probably this Perſon was one) thought theſe Commandments of trivial Account, and eaſy Performance, and yet by ſome of theſe it was, that our Saviour intended, by and by to convince this Inquirer, that he neither had kept, nor could keep them.

Since our Bleſſed Saviour here requires of this young Man, not only to withdraw his Heart from an inordinate Love of his Poſſeſſions, but to ſell them all, and give the Money to the Poor, we may be ſure, that this was a particular Command to him, in order to convince him of the Inſincerity of his pretended Love to Life eternal, and not a Precept common to all Chriſtians. That there were rich Men in the Church, we learn from ſeveral Paſſages in Scripture, 1 Tim. vi. 17. James i. 10. and ii. 2. St. Peter, in his Speech to Ananias, permits Chriſtians to retain what is their own, Acts v. 4. and St. Paul does not injoin the Corinthians to ſell all, and give Alms, but, only requeſts them to adminiſter to their Brethren's Wants out of their Abundance, 2 Cor. viii. 14. So that if Riches fall into the Hands of one, who knoweth how to uſe them to God's Glory, and the Relief of indigent Chriſtians, as well as to ſupply his own Needs, it ſeems a Contradiction to conceive, that God requires him to part with them, and to diveſt himſelf of any farther Opportunity of promoting his Glory, and doing Good to his needy Members. This Precept therefore of ſelling all we have, can only take Place when we are in the ſame Situation with this young Man, i. e. have an expreſs Command from God ſo to do, or when we find that our Riches are an Impediment to the

ſecuring of our eternal Intereſt; for, in that Caſe, we muſt part with a right Hand, or a right Eye, the neareſt and deareſt Things we have, rather than be caſt into Hell-fire.

There are three different Opinions among Interpreters, concerning the Meaning in the proverbial Saying, of a Camel's going through the Eye of a Needle. Some imagine, that at Jeruſalem, there was a Gate ſo very low and narrow, that a loaded Camel could not paſs through it, and that, by Reaſon of its Littleneſs, it was called the Needle's Eye; but all this is mere Fiction, deviſed on Purpoſe to ſolve the ſeeming Difficulty. The Jews indeed, to ſignify a Thing impoſſible, had a common Proverb among them, that an "Elephant cannot paſs through the Eye of a Needle." Now, our Saviour, ſay ſome, was pleaſed to change their Proverb from an Elephant (which was a Beaſt that few had ſeen) to a Camel, a Creature very common in Syria, and whoſe Bunch on his Back hindered him from paſſing through any ſtrait Entrance. But others, not able to diſcern any Analogy between a Camel and a Needle's Eye, think that the Greek Word here ſignifies a Cable, or thick Rope, which Mariners uſe in caſting their Anchors; and that the rather, not only becauſe there is ſome ſimilitude between a Cable and a Thread which is uſually drawn through the Eye of a Needle, but becauſe the Jews (as the learned Buxtrof acquaints us) have a Proverb of the like Import, relating to the Cable, as they have to the Elephants; for ſo they ſay, that "as difficult is the Paſſage of the Soul out of the Body, as that of a Cable through a narrow Hole. Whether of theſe two Interpretations takes place, 'tis a Matter of pure Indifference: Only we may obſerve, that the Application of the Proverb to the rich Man's entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, muſt not be underſtood abſolutely, but only ſo, as to denote a Thing extreamly difficult, if not impoſſible, without an extraordinary Influence of the divine Grace.

"They were exceedingly amazed, ſaying, Who then can be ſaved?" But why ſhould they ſtart this Queſtion, when there were apparently more Poor than Rich in the World? Theſe Poor, however, the Diſciples might think, were, by their Poverty, expoſed to as many and great Temptations, as the Rich were; and as the World, they ſuppoſed, was made up either of thoſe that were rich, or thoſe that deſired to be ſo, from hence they collected the Difficulty for any to get to Heaven.

The Word, which in the Original, ſignifies the general Reſurrection, properly ſignifies a new and ſecond State, and is uſed among the Pythagoreans for the Return of the Soul, after it had left one Body to take Poſſeſſion of another: And, agreeably hereunto, it is uſed, by ſacred Writers, to denote either the future Reſurrection, which will be the Re-union of the Soul and Body, or that great Change, which was to be effected in the World, by the Preaching of the Goſpel, and more eſpecially,

pecially, by the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, after our Lord's Aſcenſion into Heaven.

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ſecuring of our eternal Intereſt; for, in that Caſe, we muſt part with a right Hand, or a right Eye, the neareſt and deareſt Things we have, rather than be caſt into Hell-fire.

There are three different Opinions among Interpreters, concerning the Meaning in the proverbial Saying, of a Camel's going through the Eye of a Needle. Some imagine, that at Jeruſalem, there was a Gate ſo very low and narrow, that a loaded Camel could not paſs through it, and that, by Reaſon of its Littleneſs, it was called the Needle's Eye; but all this is mere Fiction, deviſed on Purpoſe to ſolve the ſeeming Difficulty. The Jews indeed, to ſignify a Thing impoſſible, had a common Proverb among them, that an "Elephant cannot paſs through the Eye of a Needle." Now, our Saviour, ſay ſome, was pleaſed to change their Proverb from an Elephant (which was a Beaſt that few had ſeen) to a Camel, a Creature very common in Syria, and whoſe Bunch on his Back hindered him from paſſing through any ſtrait Entrance. But others, not able to diſcern any Analogy between a Camel and a Needle's Eye, think that the Greek Word here ſignifies a Cable, or thick Rope, which Mariners uſe in caſting their Anchors; and that the rather, not only becauſe there is ſome ſimilitude between a Cable and a Thread which is uſually drawn through the Eye of a Needle, but becauſe the Jews (as the learned Buxtrof acquaints us) have a Proverb of the like Import, relating to the Cable, as they have to the Elephants; for ſo they ſay, that "as difficult is the Paſſage of the Soul out of the Body, as that of a Cable through a narrow Hole. Whether of theſe two Interpretations takes place, 'tis a Matter of pure Indifference: Only we may obſerve, that the Application of the Proverb to the rich Man's entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, muſt not be underſtood abſolutely, but only ſo, as to denote a Thing extreamly difficult, if not impoſſible, without an extraordinary Influence of the divine Grace.

"They were exceedingly amazed, ſaying, Who then can be ſaved?" But why ſhould they ſtart this Queſtion, when there were apparently more Poor than Rich in the World? Theſe Poor, however, the Diſciples might think, were, by their Poverty, expoſed to as many and great Temptations, as the Rich were; and as the World, they ſuppoſed, was made up either of thoſe that were rich, or thoſe that deſired to be ſo, from hence they collected the Difficulty for any to get to Heaven.

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Mary, of the dangerous Sickneſs of their Brother Lazarus, a Perſon highly beloved and eſteemed by him; but he propoſing, on this Occaſion, to manifeſt the Glory of God, as well as his own divine Power and Miſſion, by a greater Miracle than a ſimple Cure would be, delayed his going, until Lazarus was dead, and then ſet forward.

While he was in his Journey he took his Apoſtles aſide, and told them ſtill more plainly what the Event would be; namely, that at this Time of his going to Jeruſalem, the Chief-prieſts and Scribes would apprehend, and condemn him, "and then deliver him to the Gentiles, who would ſcourge him, and mock, and crucify him; but that, on the third Day he would riſe again." Upon the mention of his Reſurrection, which they vainly imagined would be the Beginning of the terreſtrial Greatneſs, James and John, by the Mouth of their Mother Salome, requeſted of him, to have the firſt Places in his Kingdom. The firſt Places in his Kingdom, he told them, were to be diſpoſed of according to the Pre-determination of his Father; but a proper Qualification for them it was, to be able to take the greateſt Share of the bitter Cup of his Sufferings, which very probably might be their Fate; and, when the Ambition of theſe two Brothers provoked the Indignation of the other ten Apoſtles, he declared to them all, that his Kingdom was far different from thoſe of the World, whoſe Princes and Governors ſtrove to exerciſe their utmoſt Power and Dominion over their Subjects; whereas, whoever expected to be great and chief among his Followers, muſt be a Servant to the reſt, according to his own Example, who came not to take State upon him, but to ſerve others, and even to lay down his Life for their Redemption.

Purſuant to our ſettled Method, we ſhall here explain what may ſeem difficult in this Period of the Story.

Bethany took its Name from the Tract of Ground wherein it ſtands, ſo called from the Greek Word which ſignifies the Dates of Palm-trees, that grew there in great Plenty. It was a conſiderable Place, ſituated at the Foot of the Mount of Olives, about fifteen Furlongs, or near two Miles Eaſtward from Jeruſalem; but at preſent it is but a very ſmall Village. One of our modern Travellers acquaints us, that, at the firſt Entrance into it, there is an old Ruin, which they call Lazarus's-Caſtle, ſuppoſed to have been the Manſion-houſe, where he and his Siſters lived. At the Bottom of a ſmall Deſcent, not far from the Caſtle, you ſee his Sepulchre, which the Turks hold in great Veneration, and uſe for an Oratory, or Place of Prayer. Here, going down by twenty-five ſteep Steps, you come, at firſt, into a ſmall ſquare Room, and from thence creep into another that is leſs, about a Yard and a half deep, in which the Body is ſaid to have been laid. About a Bow-ſhot from hence, you paſs by a Place, which, they ſay, was Mary Magdalen's Habitation; and then, deſcending a ſteep Hill, you come to the Fountain of the Apoſtles, which is ſo called, becauſe

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(as the Tradition goes) theſe holy Perſons were wont to refreſh themſelves here, between Jeruſalem and Jericho, as 'tis very probable they might; becauſe the Fountain is both cloſe to the Road's Side, and very inviting to the thirſty Traveller.

Our Saviour's Stay for two Days after the Meſſage, and modeſt Addreſs of the two mournful Siſters, kept them indeed a little longer in Suſpence and Grief; but it ſhewed his perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs, as it made the wonderful Work more remarkable, and conducive to the fuller Conviction of the Spectators. Had he gone before Lazarus was dead, they might have attributed his Recovery, rather to the Strength of Nature, than to Chriſt's miraculous Power; or had he raiſed him as ſoon as he was dead, they might peradventure have thought it, rather ſome Trance or Extaſy, than a Death or Diſſolution: But now, to raiſe a Perſon four Days dead, offenſive, and reduced to Corruption, was a Surprize of unutterable Joy to his Friends; removed all poſſible Suſpicion of Confederacy; ſilenced the peeviſh Cavilling, and triumphed over all the Obſtinacy of Prejudice and Infidelity.

In the Courſe of the Goſpel, we find our Lord forewarning his Diſciples, no leſs than three Times of his approaching Sufferings and Reſurrection. The firſt Intimation of this Kind was, in in the Coaſts of Cæſarea Philippi; when after St. Peter's Confeſſion of him to be "the Chriſt, the Son of the living God, he began to ſhew unto his Diſciples, how that he muſt ſuffer many Things, &c." The next we meet with was immediately after his Transfiguration in the Mount; when, as he came down from thence, with the three Apoſtles who were the Companions of his Privacies, he reminded them of what he had told them before, viz. "That the Son of Man ſhould be delivered into the Hands of Men." The third Warning was that, which he gave his Apoſtles apart, when he was going to Jeruſalem to ſuffer, or, as ſome think, when he was going to Bethany, in order to raiſe Lazarus from the Dead: And 'tis obſerved of theſe ſeveral Warnings, that they riſe by Degrees, and grow more full and direct, in Proportion as the Things drew nearer. Thus, the firſt is delivered in general Terms: "The Son of Man muſt ſuffer many Things, and be rejected, and ſlain, and raiſed the third Day." The ſecond is enforced with this ſolemn Preface, "Let theſe Sayings ſink down in your Ears;" and the third deſcends to a more particular Deſcription of that tragical Scene, "He ſhall be delivered to the Gentiles, and mocked, and ſpitefully entreated, and ſpitted on; and they ſhall ſcourge him, and put him to Death, and the third Day he ſhall riſe again." Now whether we conſider the Danger the Apoſtles were in of being oppreſſed with an Affliction, ſo ſenſible, as the Death of their Maſter; or the general Miſtake, wherewith they were infected, concerning the Splendor and worldly Pomp of the Meſſiah's Kingdom, or the Scandal that would neceſſarily ariſe from the Notion of a crucified Saviour,

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this Method of forewarning his Diſciples of what was to come upon him, was highly requiſite to ſuſtain them in their Tribulation, to rectify their Sentiments, and remove all Offence, as it ſhewed, that his Death was voluntary, conſonant to the Predictions of the Prophets, agreeable to the Counſel and Appointment of God, and the Shame of his Crucifixion abundantly recompenſed by the Glories of his Reſurrection.

The Mother of James and John might be encouraged to aſk the firſt Places in the Kingdom, upon the Account of her near Relation to the bleſſed Virgin, her conſtant accompanying our Saviour, and diligent Attendance upon him; and might conceive ſome Hopes of her Sons future Exaltation, from the pompous Name which our Lord had given them, and the great Privilege to which he had admitted them (but excluded others) of attending him in his Privacies.

It was anciently the Cuſtom, at great Entertainments, for the Governor of the Feaſt to appoint to each of his Gueſts the Kind and Proportion of Wine they were to drink, and what he had thus appointed them, it was thought a Breach of good Manners, either to refuſe, or not drink up. Hence a Man's Cup, both in ſacred and prophane Authors, came to ſignify the Portion, whether of Good or Evil, which befalls him in the World. Not unlike what we meet with in the Pſalmiſt, "In the Hand of the Lord there is a Cup, and the Wine is red; it is full mixed, and he poureth out of the ſame. As for the Dregs thereof, all the Ungodly of the Earth ſhall drink them out," Pſalm lxv. 8. And what our Saviour means by this Expreſſion, we cannot be to ſeek, ſince in two remarkable Paſſages, Luke xxii. 42. and John xviii. 11. he has been his own Interpreter, for Lethale poculum bibere, or to taſte of Death was a common Phraſe among the Jews, and from them we have Reaſon to believe that our Lord borrowed it.

The Prediction concerning the Fate of James and John, was literally fulfilled in St. James, who was put to Death by Herod, and ſo, in the higheſt Senſe of the Words, was made to drink of our Lord's Cup, and, though St. John was not brought to ſuffer Martyrdom, yet his being ſcourged and impriſoned by the Council, at Jeruſalem, put into a Cauldron of burning Oil at Epheſus, and baniſhed into Patmos for the Word of God, and for the Teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt, may well be ſuppoſed to be ſome Part of that bitter Cup, which our Saviour drank; and that he, who underwent ſuch Torments, as nothing but a Miracle could deliver him, may, with great Juſtice, be eſteemed a Martyr.

The Words in the Text are, "The Princes of the Gentiles exerciſe Dominion over them, and they that are great exerciſe Authority upon them; but it ſhall not be ſo among you: But whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your Miniſter," Matt. xx. 25, 26. and from hence ſome have inferred, that our Saviour forbids them, who will be his Diſciples, or the Subjects

jects of his Kingdom, the Exerciſe of all civil and eccleſiaſtical Dominion. But if it be conſidered, that civil Government was, from the Beginning of the World, inſtituted by God (and therefore called his Ordinance, Rom. xiii. 2.) for the Puniſhment of Evil-doers, and for the Defence of thoſe that do well; that Chriſtianity, when it came into the World, made no Alteration in Things of this Nature, but left the Magiſtrate, after his Converſion, ſtill bearing the Sword, in the ſame Manner as he did before; and that the Exerciſe of his Power is a Thing ſo ſacred, as to intitle, not only Princes, but even their deputed Miniſters of Juſtice to the Stile of Gods in Scripture, it muſt needs be allowed, that what is reputed ſo honourable, and found ſo beneficial, ſo ſtrict a Bond of human Virtue, and ſo firm a Guard againſt all Kinds of Wickedneſs, can never be forbidden in any Chriſtian Common-wealth. And, in like Manner, ſince, among the Gifts diſtributed for the Uſe of the Church, we read of Governments, 1 Cor. xii. 28. and find Mention made of thoſe, who are ſet over us in the Lord, 1 Theſſ. v. 12. to whom we muſt yield Obedience, and ſubmit ourſelves, Heb. xiii. 7, 17. ſince we find that the Apoſtles had the Rod, 1 Cor. iv. 21. and Power given of the Lord, to deliver to Satan, 1 Cor. v. 5. and to revenge all Unrighteouſneſs, 2 Cor. x. 6. and ſince in the Nature of the Thing it is every whit as impoſſible, for the Church to ſubſiſt without Eccleſiaſtical Government, as it is for a State without civil, it muſt needs follow, that the one is as neceſſary, and of divine Inſtitution, as much as the other. All therefore that our Saviour can be preſumed to forbid in theſe Words, is ſuch a Dominion, whether in Church or State, as is attended with Tyranny, Oppreſſion, and a Contempt of the Subjects, that live under it. Such, for the moſt Part, was the Government that obtained in the Eaſtern Countries; and therefore, in Oppoſition to this, our ſpiritual Rulers are put in Mind, that they "feed the Flock which is among them, taking the Over-ſight thereof, not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind, neither as being Lords of God's Inheritance, but Enſamples to the Flock," 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. that their higheſt Station in the Church is not ſo much a Place of Dignity, as a Charge and Office, which ſubjects them to the Wants and Neceſſities of thoſe they rule over; and that the moſt honourable Poſt they can have in his Kingdom, is only a larger Miniſtry, and Attendance upon others; for, "Who is Paul? who is Apollo? but Miniſters by whom ye believed," 1 Cor. iii. 4. "For we preach not ourſelves (ſays the Apoſtle to the Corinthians) but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and ourſelves your Servants for Jeſu's Sake," 2 Cor. iv. 5.

But it is Time we reſume the Hiſtory.

As he drew near to Jericho, attended with a numerous Company, one Bartimeus, who had long ſat by the Way-ſide begging, hearing the Noiſe of a vaſt Crowd of People paſſing by, and being informed that Jeſus of Nazareth was among them, with another blind Man,

Man, who begged along with him, called aloud upon Jeſus to have Mercy upon him. The People who accompanied our Lord, ſuppoſing that the Man aſked an Alms, bid him ceaſe his Noiſe; but the Benefit, which he deſired was of a greater Moment, and therefore he raiſed his Voice, and, with more Importunity, cried, "Thou Son of David, have Mercy upon me;" which when our Lord perceived, he commanded both him and his Companion to be brought before him; and, upon their declaring what Favour they expected, he touched their Eyes, and immediately they received their Sight, and followed him glorifying God, as indeed all the Company did, who had been Eye-witneſſes of this Miracle.

As our Lord was paſſing through Jericho, a certain Man, named Zaccheus, of great Wealth and Figure among the Publicans, was not a little deſirous to ſee him: but as he was a Man of low Stature and could not gratify his Curioſity in the Crowd, he ran before, and climbed up into a Sycamore-tree, where he could not fail of having a full View of him. When our Saviour came near the Place, he called him by his Name, and bad him come down, becauſe he intended to be his Gueſt that Day; whereupon Zaccheus received him with great Expreſſions of Joy and Reſpect, whilſt others could not forbear reflecting upon him, for entering the Houſe of a Man of ſo ſcandalous a Profeſſion. But notwithſtanding all their Cenſures, our Saviour, who, from the Intuition of his Heart, as well as his own Declaration, knew him to be a juſt and charitable Man, pronounced him and his Family, in a State of Salvation; and that he, though a Publican, and an Alien to the Common-wealth of Iſrael, was nevertheleſs one of thoſe, to whom the Promiſes made unto Abraham did belong.

The nearer they came to Jeruſalem, the more the Diſciples began to think, that Jeſus had taken that Journey to the Paſſover on purpoſe to ſeat himſelf upon his Throne, and aſſume his regal Authority, and therefore, to cure their Minds of all ſuch Thoughts, he propounded a Parable to them "of a certain great Man, born Heir to a Kingdom, and going into a far Country to take Poſſeſſion of it; but, before he departed, calling his Servants together, and giving each a Sum of Money to trade withal, until he ſhould return. The Reaſon of his Journey to this foreign Land was, becauſe his own Countrymen over whom he had a Right to reign, were obſtinately ſet againſt, and diſclaimed him for their King: When therefore he had obtained his new Kingdom, and was returned home, he firſt called his Servants, with whom he had intruſted his Money to an Account, rewarding the Diligent with Gifts proportionate to their Improvements, and puniſhing the Negligent with perpetual Impriſonment; and then taking Cognizance of his Countrymen, who, upon their going to be inthorned in another Kingdom, diſclaimed all Obedience to him, he ordered them, in his Preſence, to be put to Death, as ſo many Rebels;" intimating

timating hereby, both the Puniſhment of negligent Chriſtians, and the Deſtruction of the contumacious Jews.

By the Time that our Lord arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had now been four Days dead, and buried; and ſeveral Friends, and others, from Jeruſalem, were come to condole with the two Siſters, Martha and Mary, for the Loſs of their Brother. Upon the firſt News of our Lord's Approach, the two Siſters, attended with ſome of the Company, that was in the Houſe, went out to meet him; and pouring out a Flood of Tears for the Loſs of their dear Brother, fell proſtrate at his Feet, and wiſhed, over and over again, that he had come a little ſooner, for then they were certain, that he would not have died. The Sight of their Tears and Sorrow, accompanied with the Lamentations of their Followers, affected the Son of God ſo, that he groaned within himſelf; and then demanding where they had laid the Body, he followed them to the Place, ſympathiſing with their Sorrow, and weeping as well as they, which made ſome of the Company remark, why he did not prevent his Death. When he was come to the Grave, and had ordered the Stone to be removed from it, after a ſhort Addreſs of Adoration, and Thankſgiving to his Father (for his continual Readineſs to hear him) he cried with a loud Voice, Lazarus, come forth; whereupon he, that was dead, immediately aroſe from his Bed of Darkneſs, and in ſuch ſound Health, that when his Grave-cloaths were unlooſed, he was able to walk along with them to Bethany.

Here let us ſtop to explain the foregoing Paſſages.

Jericho was a wealthy City, in the Tribe of Benjamin, the firſt which Joſhua took from the Canaanites, and utterly deſtroyed, with a Curſe upon him who ſhould rebuild it, Joſh. vi. 26. In the Days of Ahab however, Hiel, a Bethelite, did rebuild it, and had the Curſe, pronounced by Joſhua, fully inflicted upon him, 1 Kings xvi. 34. After its Reſtoration, this City was ennobled by the Schools of the Prophets, for its Situation ſeems to have been pleaſant; only the Misfortune was, that the Waters of a large Spring, which aroſe not far from it, were very unwholeſome, and deſtroyed the Fruitfulneſs of the Soil, until Eliſha cured it, 2 Kings v. 21. From which Time the Country, being well watered, became extremely fruitful. It abounded with Gardens, and thick Groves of Palm-trees, and afforded great Quantities of Balſam, which was the beſt Commodity of the Place. The Country (according to Joſephus) is ſeated in a Plain, narrow, but long; for it runs out Northward to the Country of Scythopolis, and Southward to the Land of Sodom, being an hundred and fifty Miles in Length, and fifteen in Breadth, and ſeems to be the Place which is called by St. Matthew, the Region about Jordan. As to the City itſelf, in the Time of the ſecond Temple, it yielded to none in all Judea, except Jeruſalem (from which it was diſtant about nineteen Miles) for it had a royal Palace in it, where Herod the Great ended his Days; an Hyppodrome, where the

Jewiſh Nobility were ſhut up, on Purpoſe to be ſlain after his Death; and an Amphitheatre, where his Will was publickly opened and read, with other ſtately Buildings; but, at preſent it is only a poor naſty Village of the Arabs.

St. Mark and St Luke both make mention only of one blind Man, the Son of Timeus, upon this Occaſion; but this they doubtleſs did, becauſe he was better known than the other, and bore the greater Part in this Tranſaction.

Whether Zaccheus was a Jew or a Gentile, our Commentators are not agreed. The Majority of them account him a Jew, but the Words of our Bleſſed Saviour, "This Day Salvation is come to this Houſe, foraſmuch as he alſo is the Son of Abraham," do very much incline us to think the contrary. "Abraham believed, we are told, and it was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs:" And therefore Zaccheus is here called his Son becauſe he readily believed in the divine Miſſion of our Saviour Chriſt: "For the Seed of Abraham was not that only, which is of the Law, but that alſo, which is of the Faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all." Tis not to be doubted therefore, but that this Day, in Purſuance of our Lord's Declaration, Zaccheus was fully converted to the Chriſtian Faith; but whether he was afterwards ordained by St. Peter to be Biſhop of Paleſtine, is not ſo very clear from Church-hiſtory; but that they, who advance this Notion, may be ſuppoſed to have confounded him with another Zaccheus, Biſhop of that Church, who lived in the ſecond Century.

The Parable of a great Man going into a foreign Country, to take Poſſeſſion of his Kingdom, we may obſerve, conſiſts of two Parts. The former of which relates to the rebellious Subjects of this Prince, who went into a far Country to receive a Kingdom; the latter relates to that Prince's Servants, to whom he had committed his Money for them to improve in his Abſence; and the Explication of the whole is generally ſuppoſed to be this.—The Nobleman, or Prince here, is our Lord himſelf, the Son of God; his going into a far Country to receive a Kingdom, is his Aſcenſion into Heaven, to ſit down at the Right-hand of the divine Majeſty, and take Poſſeſſion of his mediatorial Kingdom; his Servants may be either his Apoſtles and Diſciples, who, upon his Return, were to give an Account of the Progreſs of his Goſpel; or Chriſtians in general, who, for every Talent, whether natural or acquired, are accountable. His Citizens are, queſtionleſs, the Jews, who, not only rejected him with Scorn, but put him to an ignominious Death; and his Return is the Day of his fierce Wrath, and Vengeance upon the Jewiſh Nation, which came upon them, about forty Years after this Time, and was indeed ſo very terrible, as to be a Kind of Emblem and Repreſentation of that great Day of Accounts, when he will render to every one according to his Works. It is obſerved however, by ſome Commentators, farther, that our Lord took the Riſe of this Parable from the Cuſtoms of the Kings of Judea (ſuch as Herod the Great, and Archelaus

laus his Son) who uſually went to Rome to receive their Kingdom from Cæſar, without whoſe Permiſſion and Appointment they durſt not take the Government into their Hands. In the Caſe of Archelaus indeed, the Reſemblance is ſo great, that almoſt every Circumſtance of the Parable concurs in him. He was this Eugenes, or Man of great Parentage, as being the Son of Herod the Great: He was obliged to go into a far Country, i. e. to Rome, to receive the Kingdom of the Emperor Auguſtus. The Jews, who hated him becauſe of his cruel and tyrannical Reign, ſent their Meſſengers after him, deſiring to be freed from the Yoke of Kings, and reduced to a Province of Rome: Their Complaint however was not heard: He was confirmed in the Kingdom of Judea; and when he returned home, tyrannized for ten Years over thoſe, that would have ſhook off their Dominion; but then there is this remarkable Difference between his Caſe, and that in the Parable, that the Jews, upon their ſecond Complaint to Cæſar, prevailed againſt him, and procured his Baniſhment to Vienna.

It was cuſtomary among the Jews (as Dr. Lightfoot tells us from Maimonidas) and others to go to the Sepulchre of their deceaſed Friends, and viſit them for three Days, for ſo long they ſuppoſed that their Spirits hovered about them; but when once they perceived their Viſage began to change, as it would in three Days, in their Countries, all Hopes of a Return of Life were at an End. After a Revolution of Humours, which in ſeventy-two Hours is compleat, their Bodies tend naturally to Putrefaction, and therefore Martha had Reaſon to ſay, that her Brother's Body (which appears by the Context to have been laid in the Sepulchre the ſame Day that he died) would now, in the fourth Day, begin to ſtink.

The Time of Mourning for departed Friends was antiently, among the Jews, of longer Continuance than four Days. For Jacob they mourned forty Days, and for Aaron and Moſes thirty: For Perſons of an inferior Quality three Days, very probably, they were fewer, but ſome they had for all; the general Term, both among the Jews and Gentiles, was ſeven. During this Time, their Neighbours and Friends came to viſit them, and to alleviate their Sorrows with the beſt Arguments they could; they prayed with them, they read with them the forty-ninth Pſalm, prayed for the Soul of the Dead, and diſtributed their Comforts in Proportion to their Loſs: but no-body opened his Mouth until the afflicted Perſon had firſt ſpoken, becauſe Job's three Friends, who came to comfort him, we find did the ſame, Job vii. 13. All which Ceremonies made the Concourſe to Martha's Houſe at this Time, the greater, and gave more Jews an Opportunity to be Eye-witneſſes of her Brother's Reſurrection.

Our Saviour could not but know, who knew all Things, where they had laid the Body, yet he thought proper thus to aſk, that, being conducted by them to the Sepulchre,

there might be no Reſemblance of any Fraud or Confederacy.

The Words in the Text, "Some of them ſaid, could not this Man, who opened the Eyes of the Blind, have cauſed, that this Man ſhould not have died?" Some imagine, were ſpoken only in Admonition, that having given Sight to a blind Man, that was a mere Stranger to him, he did not cure his Sick Friend: But others conceive a vile Sarcaſm in the Words, and as if they went about to weaken his Reputation, in a Miracle, wherein he had manifeſtly ſhewn his divine Power, becauſe he did not preſerve his Friend from dying.

The common Form of a Burial-place, among the antient Jews, was a Vault hewn out of a Rock, ſix Cubits long, and four broad, in which eight (or, as ſome ſay, thirteen) other little Cells, or Niches were uſually made, as ſo many diſtinct Receptacles for the Bodies that were to be laid in them. The Mouth or Entrance of this Vault, was cloſed with a large Stone, which whenever they buried any, was removed; and our Saviour here ordered the Removal of that which lay upon Lazarus, to make the Miracle appear more evident, becauſe it would have looked more like an Apparition than a Reſurrection, had Lazarus come forth when the Door of his Sepulchre was ſo firmly ſhut.

As our bleſſed Saviour, in Virtue of his Union with God the Father had naturally, and in himſelf, a Power of working Miracles, there was no Need for his addreſſing himſelf to Heaven every Time that he did any: However, upon this, and ſome other Occaſions, we find him praying to God, under the Title of his Father, that all the Company might know, that what he did was by a divine, not diabolical Power; and that God, in granting his Petition, acknowledged him to be his Son.

Let us now go on to the next Period of our Hiſtory.

This great and apparent Miracle cauſed the utmoſt Surprize and Aſtoniſhment among all the Spectators, and the greateſt Part of them were, from that Time, convinced, and believed on him; but others, more obſtinate, went and reported the Thing to the Phariſees at Jeruſalem, who thereupon called together their grand Sanhedrim, where after ſome ſolemn Debate, it was concluded, "That, whether the Man was a Prophet ſent from God, or not, for Fear of giving any Umbrage to the Roman Powers, it was highly expedient that he ſhould die, rather than that the whole Nation, for his Sake, ſhould incur the Danger of being ruined," And from that Time they entered into a Combination to have him apprehended and put to Death; but, as his Hour was not yet come, at preſent he declined their Fury by retreating from the Publick, and retiring to a little Place, called Ephraim, in the Tribe of Benjamin, where he continued for a few Days, with his Apoſtles, until the Time of the Paſſover was approaching.

Six Days before that ſolemn Feaſt began, our Lord, in his Way to Jeruſalem

lem, called at Bethany, where he was kindly entertained at Supper by the two Siſters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Martha, according to her Cuſtom dreſſed the Supper, but Lazarus whom he had raiſed, was one of the Company that ſat at Table with him; while Mary, to expreſs her Bounty, took a Vial of the moſt valuable Eſſence, made of Spikenard, and poured it upon his Feet, anointed them, and wiped them with her Hair, ſo that the whole Houſe was filled with the Fragrancy of its perfume. This Action Judas Iſcariot, who afterwards betrayed his Maſter, and had, at that Time, the Cuſtody of the Bag, wherein Money for charitable, and other neceſſary Uſes, was kept, highly blamed, as a Piece of Prodigality, in throwing away what might have been ſold for three hundred Pence, and given to the Poor; not that he valued the Poor, but becauſe he was a greedy Wretch, who was always purloining ſome Part of the publick Money to himſelf. Our Saviour therefore, who knew the Sincerity of Mary's, and the Naughtineſs of Judas' Heart, in a very gentle Reply, commended what ſhe had done, as a ſeaſonable Ceremony to ſolemnize his approaching Death, but blamed the other's pretended Concern for the Poor, ſince Objects of this Kind they had always with them, but his Continuance among them was not to be long.

While they were ſitting at this Supper, great Numbers of Jews, out of Curioſity, came to Bethany, not only to have a Sight of Jeſus, but of Lazarus likewiſe, whom he had raiſed from the Dead, but when the Sanhedrim underſtood that the Reſurrection of Lazarus occaſioned many People to believe on Jeſus, they conſulted how to deſtroy him likewiſe. In the mean Time Jeſus having tarried all Night at Bethany, ſet forward, next Morning, with his Diſciples, and others attending him on his Way to Jeruſalem. When he came to a Place called Bethphage, on the Side of Mount Olivet, he ſent two of his Diſciples, into the Village, to bring from thence an Aſs, and her Colt, which was not as yet backed, that, to accompliſh a remarkble Prophecy, he might ride thereon to Jeruſalem. The Diſciples did as they were ordered; and, having mounted their Maſter on the Colt, he proceeded, as it were in Triumph towards the City, amidſt the loud Acclamations of an innumerable Multitude, whilſt Crowds of People came forth to meet him, with Branches of Palm-trees in their Hands, ſome ſpreading their Garments in the Way, others cutting down Branches, and ſtrewing them where he was to paſs, and all, as it were, with one Voice, crying, "Hoſanna to the Son of David! Bleſſed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Hoſanna in the Higheſt!"

In this triumphant Manner they advanced, till they came to the Deſcent of Mount Olivet, when the whole Body of Diſciples, being tranſported with the Honours ſhewn to their Maſter, broke out into Raptures of Thankſgiving, and loud Doxologies to God, for

for all the mighty Works which they had ſeen; while the whole Body of the People, as well thoſe that went before, as thoſe that followed after, joined with the Diſciples in their Hoſannas and Acclamations; ſo that when ſome Phariſees, being envious of his Glory, deſired him to command their Silence; if they ſhould be ſilent, he told them, the very Stones would proclaim his Praiſe.

But, notwithſtanding all this glorious Proceſſion, as he advanced near to Jeruſalem, ſo as to have a full View of the City, and Temple, he caſt his Eyes upon that wretched Place, whoſe deplorable Miſeries he foreſaw, and with Tears in his Eyes, made this Lamentation over it; "Oh! that thou hadſt known, at leaſt in this thy appointed Day, the Things conducing to thy Peace; but now alas! they are hidden from thine Eyes. For the fatal Time ſhall come, when thy Enemies ſhall throw up Trenches about thee, hem thee in on every Side, deſtroy thy Children, demoliſh thee, and not leave thee one Stone upon another, becauſe thou wouldſt not know the Time of thy Viſitation.

Some explanatory Remarks are here neceſſary.

The Jews ſeeing the Miracles which Jeſus did (this eſpecially of raiſing Lazarus) did greatly fear, leaſt taking upon him the publick Character of the Meſſiah, he would attempt to make himſelf King, and, by the Admiration which he had gained among the People, be quickly enabled to accompliſh his Ends, unleſs he was timely prevented. If then he was permitted to go on in his Pretenſions, the Conſequence ſeemed viſible to them, that the Romans, to whom they were already ſubject, would look upon this as a Rebellion, and ſo be provoked to come with an Army, and deſtroy them utterly. That this was their Fear, is evident from the many groundleſs Objections which they made againſt our Saviour, as that, He forbade to give Tribute to Cæſar, and that he made himſelf a King, and ſo oppoſed the Title of Tiberius. Not that they deſired the Continuance of Cæſar's Dominion over them, but the Apprehenſion of a ſtill farther Conqueſt from the Romans made them unwilling to provoke them, and that more eſpecially, becauſe they had an ancient Tradition, that one Armolus (which is, by an eaſy Change Romulus) before the End of the World, would come, and deſtroy them. This ſeems to be but the Depravation of ſome Prophecy from God, which, foretold the Coming of the Romans in the laſt Days (meaning thereby the Days of the Meſſiah) to deſtroy them. It demonſtrates however, that they both believed, and expected that the Romans where the People, from whom the Change of their Religion, and the total Subverſion of their Government, were to come; and for this Reaſon they were, upon all Occaſions, ſo very fearful to offend them. But herein they were ſadly miſtaken; for the Prophecy of the Romans coming to deſtroy their Temple and Nation was fulfilled, not by their letting Chriſt alone, or believing in him, but by their

their thus oppoſing and conſpiring againſt him.

Ephraim was ſituated between Bethel and Jericho, about twenty Miles to the North of Jeruſalem.

Some Interpreters are of Opinion, that the Supper at which our Saviour was entertained by Martha and Mary, was the ſame which he was invited to in the Houſe of Simon the Leper; that St. John has related it in its proper Place, as a Thing which happened ſix Days before the Paſſover; but that the other Evangeliſt have mentioned it by way of Recapitulation, to ſhew what might be the probable Occaſion of Judas's Treachery, even his Vexation for being diſappointed of the Money that might have been made of this precious Ointment, had it been ſold, and put in the Bag for him to purloin: But others ſuppoſe, that this Supper was different from that which is mentioned Matth. xxvi. 6. and Mark xiv. 3. 1ſt, Becauſe this was in the Houſe of Lazarus, John xii. 2. that in the Houſe of Simon the Leper, Matth. xxvi. 6. 2dly, Here Mary anoints the Feet of Chriſt, ver. 3. there a Woman not named pours Ointment on his Head. Matth. xxvi. 7. 3dly, This Supper was ſix Days before the Paſſover, ver. 1. that, only two, Matth. xxvi. 2. Mark xiv. 1. and if the Suppers were not the ſame, the Mary that anointed Chriſt's Feet here, and the Woman that anointed his Head there, were not the ſame.

Nard, or Spikenard, is a Plant that grows in the Indies, with a very ſlender Root, a Stalk ſmall and long, and ſeveral Ears, or Spikes, even with the Ground, from whence it has the Name of Spikenard. The Italian Nard (if it be right) muſt be of a yellowiſh Colour, inclining towards Purple, with long Spikes, and the Briſtles of its Spikes large and odoriferous. Of the Blade, or Spike of this Nard, the Ancients were uſed to make a Perfume of great Eſteem, and, when genuine, very precious. Pliny tells us, there were nine ſeveral Herbs which imitated Nard, and that the great Price it carried, tempted many to adulterate it; but where it was found pure and unſophiſticated, there it obtained the Name of Nardus piſtica, which is the Epithet that occurs in Mark xiv. 3. and John xii. 3. unleſs, as ſome think, it may be a Miſtake in the Copiers for Spicata.

As the Roman Penny was Seven Pence Halfpenny of our Money, ſo three hundred Pence muſt amount to nine Pounds ſeven Shillings and Sixpence, the Value of this precious Box of Ointment.

It was a Cuſtom, in the Eaſtern Countries, for Kings and great Perſons, to have their Bodies, at their Funerals, embalmed with Odours, and ſweet Perfumes; and, in Alluſion hereunto, our Saviour here declares of Mary, that ſhe to teſtify her Faith in him, as her King and Lord, had, as it were beforehand, embalmed his Body with precious Ointment for his Burial.

Never was there Rage and Malice more unreaſonable than that which prompted the Rulers to deſtroy Lazarus; for be it admitted that Chriſt had broken

broken the Sabbath, and ſpoken Blaſphemy, yet what had Lazarus done? No Crime was ever alledged againſt him, and yet theſe Rulers of the People conſpire to put him to Death, merely to preſerve their own Honour and Reputation. But ſee the Providence of God, which notwithſtanding all their Contrivances, was pleaſed to preſerve him, as a Monument of his Glory, and a Teſtimony of the Miracle which Jeſus performed on him, thirty Years after our Saviour's Death.

Bethphage ſignifies the Houſe of Figs, or Dates, and might, very probably, have its Name from the ſeveral Trees of theſe Kinds, that grew there. It was a ſmall Village of the Prieſts, ſituate in Mount Olivet, and as it ſeems, ſomewhat nearer Jeruſalem than Bethany.

Mount Olivet, doubtleſs, had its Name from the great Number of Olive-trees, that grew upon it. It lay a little without Jeruſalem, on the Eaſt Side of it, about five Furlongs from the City, ſays Joſephus, but he muſt be underſtood of the very neareſt Part of it, ſince St. Luke makes the Diſtance to be a Sabbath-day's Journey, i. e. eight Furlongs, or a Mile, unleſs we ſuppoſe that he means the Summit of the Hill, from which our Saviour then aſcended, Acts i. 12. Mr. Maundrel tells us, that he, and his Company, going out of Jeruſalem, at St. Stephen's Gate, and croſſing the Valley of Jehoſaphat, began immediately to aſcend the Mountain; that, being got above two-thirds of the Way up, they came to certain Grottos, cut, with intricate Windings, and Caverns, under Ground, which were called the Sepulchres of the Prophets, that a little higher up were twelve arched Vaults, under Ground, ſtanding Side by Side, and built in Memory of the Apoſtles, who are ſaid to have compiled their Creed in this Place; that, ſixty Paces higher, they came to the Place where Chriſt is ſaid to have uttered his Prophecy concerning the final Deſtruction of Jeruſalem; and, a little on the Right-hand, to another, where he is ſaid to have dictated, a ſecond Time, the Lord's Prayer to his Diſciples; that, ſomewhat higher, is the Cave of a Saint, called Pelagia; a little above that a Pillar, denoting the Place where an Angel gave the bleſſed Virgin three Days Warning of her Death; and, at the Top of all, the Place of our bleſſed Lord's Aſcenſion.

It is well remarked by Grotius, that ſuch Animals as were never employed in the Service of Men, were wont to be choſen for ſacred Purpoſes, inſomuch that the very Heathens thought thoſe Things, and Sacrifices, moſt proper for the Service of their Gods, which had never been put to profane Uſes. Thus the Philiſtines returned the Ark, in a new Cart, drawn by Heifers, that had never before undergone the Yoke, 1 Sam. vi. 7. But the chief Deſign, that our Saviour might have, in the Orders which he gave his Diſciples, was, that the Prophecy might, by this Means, receive its full Completion: "Tell ye the Daughters of Sion, behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and ſitting upon an Aſs, and

and a Colt the Foal of an Aſs." The former Part of the Verſe is taken from Iſa. lxii. 11. and the latter, from Zach. ix. 9. Both by the Jews are acknowledged to relate to the Meſſiah, and, with regard to the latter, R. Joſeph was wont to ſay, "May the Meſſiah come, and may I be worthy to ſit under the Shadow of the Tail of his Aſs."

A great Conteſt there is among learned Men, whether our Lord rode upon the Aſs, or the Colt, or on both alternately. Thoſe, who contend for his riding on both, obſerve from the Words of the Prophet Zachariah, Chap. ix. 9. that Mention is made of riding both upon an Aſs, and a Colt, the Foal of an Aſs; and from St. Matthew, Chap. xxi. 7. they obſerve farther, that the Diſciples having brought the Aſs and the Colt, which our Saviour had ſent them for, put on them their Cloaths, and ſet him thereon. Since therefore the Relation of St. Matthew thus literally agrees with the Prophecy, our Saviour did ride upon the Aſs, as well as the Colt, they ſee no Reaſon, why theſe Texts ſhould be taken in their moſt plain and obvious Meaning, and do thence infer, that, for the more exact fulfilling of the Prophecy, our Saviour did actually ride, Part of the Way upon the one, and the remaining Part upon the other. The Generality of the Interpreters, however, are againſt this. They ſuppoſe, that as there was no Occaſion for our Saviour's riding upon both, in ſo ſhort a Journey; and, as the other three Evangeliſts only make Mention of the Colt, there ſeems to be a Neceſſity for admitting of the Figure called Enallage Numeri, in this Place; and that, as when we read, that the Ark reſted on the Mountains of Ararat, we underſtand that only upon one of them; ſo here when St. Matthew tells us, that the Diſciples brought the Aſs, and the Colt, and put their Cloaths on them, that is, upon one of them, i. e. the Colt, as the Words of the Prophecy itſelf will fairly bear: Nor was there any other Reaſon for bringing the Mother along with it, but that the Foals will not uſually go without their Dams.

Very remarkable is our Saviour's Preſcience, even as to the moſt minute Matters, in the Orders which he gives his Diſciples, viz. 1. You ſhall find a Colt; 2. On which no Man ever ſat; 3. Bound with his Mother; 4. In Bivio, or where two Ways meet; 5. As you enter into the Village; 6. The Owners of which will, at firſt, ſeem unwilling that you ſhould unbind him; 7. But when they hear, that I have need of him, they will let him go. And no leſs remarkable is the chearful Obedience of theſe Diſciples to a Command, which carnal Reaſoning might have ſtarted many Objections againſt, and which nothing leſs than a ſtedfaſt Perſuaſion, that he, who ſent the Meſſage, would be ſure to give Succeſs to it, could have prevailed upon them to execute it, as they did, without any Demur, or Delay.

At the Feaſt of the Tabernacles, it was a Cuſtom among the Jews, not only to ſing Hoſanna's with the greateſt Joy, but alſo to carry Palm-Branches in their Hands, Lev. xxiii. 40. and to deſire (as the Jews ſtill wiſh, at the Celebration of this Feaſt) that they may rejoice in this Manner, at the

Coming of the Meſſiah. Nor was it only at this Feſtival, but upon any other Occaſion of ſolemn Rejoicings, that the Jews made uſe of this Ceremony: For ſo we find, that upon the Enemies evacuating the Tower of Jeruſalem, Simon and his Men, "entered into it, with Thankſgiving and Branches of Palm-trees, and with Harps and with Cymbals, and with Viols and with Hymns and Songs." Nay, the very ſame Manner of expreſſing their Joy prevailed among other Nations, as well as the Jews; for ſo Herodotus relates, that they, who went before Xerxes, as he paſſed over the Helleſpont, ſtrowed the Way with Myrtle-branches: And, therefore we need leſs wonder, that we find ſuch of the Company, as were, by our Bleſſed Saviour's Miracles, convinced of his being their King, and the promiſed Meſſiah, teſtifying their Joy upon this his Inauguration into his Kingdom, in ſuch a Manner as they, as well as other Nations upon ſuch joyful Occaſions, were accuſtomed to.

It was a common Practice among the People of the Eaſt, upon the Approach of their Kings and Princes, to ſpread their Veſtments upon the Ground, for them to tread or ride over. In Conformity to which Cuſtom, we find the Captains, when they proclaimed Jehu King, putting their Garments under him; and Plutarch relating, that when Cato left his Soldiers, to return to Rome, they ſpread their Cloaths in the Way, which was an Honour (as he obſerves) then done to few Emperors. But the Jews, that accompanied our Saviour at this Time, looked upon him, as greater than any Emperor, as a Prince that was come to reſcue them from the Roman Yoke, and reduce all Nations under their Subjection; and therefore, in this Manner, they choſe to teſtify their Homage and Veneration to their univerſal Monarch, making now a publick Entry into his Capital of Jeruſalem.

Hoſanna, or rather Hoſa-na, is an Hebrew Word, which ſignifies, "Save, I beſeech thee," and was a common Acclamation, which the Jews uſed in their paſt Deliverance from Egypt, but in Hopes likewiſe of a future one, by the coming of the Meſſiah. Now the Reaſon why the Acclamations, upon this Occaſion, ran rather in theſe Words, than in the common Form of Long live the King, or the like, was becauſe in the Character which the Prophet gives of the Meſſiah, he is called a Saviour, or one bringing Salvation to them, Zech. ix 9. And therefore, to ſhew the Excellency of this, above all other Kings, the People addreſs him in Words, taken from the Pſalmiſt, "Help us now, O Lord, ſend us now Proſperity, Pſal. cxviii. 25." But becauſe Hoſannah is likewiſe a Form of Bleſſing; and in the Inauguration of Princes, People are always pleaſed with the rightful Succeſſion; therefore they adjoin, Hoſannah to the Son of David, i. e. the Lord proſper and heap Favours and Bleſſings upon him. Now, becauſe God promiſed the Jewiſh Nation a King, deſcended from that Royal Line, therefore they continue their good Wiſhes, "Bleſſed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord;" and becauſe again it is natural for Men,

Men, in ſuch Tranſports, to reiterate their joyful Acclamations, even, as if they deſired to make them reach Heaven, as well as Earth, therefore it is added, Hoſanna in the Higheſt.

Between Mount Olivet and the City of Jeruſalem, there lay nothing but only the Valley of Jehoſhaphat, through which ran the Brook Kedron.

"The very Stones would proclaim his Praiſe," is a proverbial Expreſſion, and ſignifies no more, than that God was determined to glorify our Saviour that Day; and therefore, if theſe Followers ſhould be prevailed upon to hold their Peace, and ſay nothing in his Praiſe, God would find out ſome other Means (tho' not ſo competent perhaps) to make it effectually be known.

The Tears which our Saviour ſhed, upon his viewing the City and Temple, were ſuch as proceeded from a profound Charity, and deep Commiſeration of the Evils that were coming upon Jeruſalem; in both which Virtues he came to be an Example to us, and therefore his Behaviour in this Reſpect, could not be unworthy of himſelf. They farther ſhew, that the Calamities which befel that impious City, might have been avoided, had they made a right Uſe of the Time of their Viſitation, otherwiſe his Tears might rather be looked upon as the Tears of a Crocodile, than thoſe of true Charity and Commiſeration.

How exactly this Prediction concerning the Miſeries that ſhould befal Jeruſalem, was fulfilled by the Romans, we may learn by the Jewiſh Hiſtorian; who not only tells us, that on this very Mount Olivet, where our Lord ſpake theſe Words, the Romans firſt pitched their Tents, when they came to the final Overthrow of Jeruſalem; but that, when Veſpaſian began the Siege of it, he encompaſſed the City round about, and kept them in on every Side; that to this Purpoſe (how impracticable ſoever the Enterprize might ſeem) Titus prevailed with the Soldiers to build a Wall of thirty-nine Furlongs quite round the City, with thirteen Turrets on it, which to the Wonder of the World, was compleated in three Days; and that, when this was done, all Poſſibility of eſcaping was cut off, and the greateſt Diſtreſs that ever befel a City, enſued, whereof that Author gives us a very lively, but moſt tragical Account.

How exactly this was likewiſe fulfilled, that "one Stone ſhould not be left on another," the ſame Hiſtorian relates, viz. That Titus having ordered the Soldiers to lay the City level with the Ground, and to leave nothing ſtanding but three of the moſt famous Turrets, that over-topped the reſt, as Monuments to Poſterity, of the Roman Power and Conduct in taking the Place; his Orders were ſo punctually executed, and all the reſt laid ſo flat, that the Place looked as if it had never been inhabited.

The Word Viſitation may be taken either in a good or bad Senſe; for either the Mercies or Judgments of God; but here it denotes the former, and particularly the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, firſt by the Miniſtry of John, then by the Preaching of Chriſt himſelf, and afterwards by the Labours of his Apoſtles and Diſciples.

CHAP. IV.

From our Lord's laſt Entry into Jeruſalem, to his Aſcenſion into Heaven; containing the Term of ſix Weeks and five Days.

UPON our Lord's Entry into Jeruſalem with ſuch a vaſt Retinue of People, the Citizens were alarmed, and began to enquire, who this great Perſon was? To which the Multitude, that accompanied him, anſwered aloud, that it was Jeſus, the Prophet of Nazareth, a Town of Galilee. Having therefore permitted his Kingdom and divine Authority to be thus proclaimed by others, he proceeded, in the next Place, to exert himſelf: For going to the Temple, and there looking about him, he found the Court of the Gentiles notoriouſly profaned and diſhonoured by Trading and Merchandize. That therefore he might end, as he had begun his Miniſtry with the Reformation of his Father's Houſe, he drove out all the Buyers and Sellers (as he did three years before) from the ſacred Ground; he overthrew the Tables of the Money-changers, and the Stalls of thoſe that ſold Doves; telling them, that they had made the Temple, which was deſervedly called an Houſe of Prayer, a Den of Thieves. And to let the People ſee, that he had both Commiſſion and Authority to act as he did, he cured, in that Inſtant, many blind and lame Perſons that were brought to him into the Temple.

The People, indeed, were filled with Admiration at the Sight of theſe Things; but the chief Prieſts and Scribes, when they ſaw the Miracles which he wrought, and heard the Acclamations of the Children, who cried out in the Temple, Hoſanna to the Son of David! were greatly enraged, and diſcovered their Anger, by aſking him, If he heard what they ſaid? But he ſilenced their Queſtion, by ſhewing them, that what was ſo diſpleaſing to them, did really fulfil the Scriptures, particularly that Paſſage in the Pſalmiſt, where it is ſaid, that "out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings thou haſt perfected Praiſe." This Anſwer, however, did but enrage them the more, and put them upon ſeeking all Occaſions to deſtroy him; tho' their Dread of the People, who heard him with the greateſt Eagerneſs and Attention, was ſome Check upon their Malice.

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The Jews were not the only Perſons who came up to Jeruſalem at the Paſſover; for many devout Greeks uſed likewiſe to reſort thither, at that Feaſt; and ſome of theſe being deſirous to have a Sight of Chriſt, addreſſed themſelves to Philip, one of the Apoſtles, and he, by the Aſſiſtance of Andrew, had them introduced. Our Lord was, at that Time, diſcourſing to the Diſciples of many Things relating to his Paſſion, and particularly of the Efficacy of his Death, and what a powerful Means it would prove to convert the World to his Religion; more powerful, indeed, than his Life could poſſibly be, even as Corn, tho' it dies in the Ground, when ſown, riſes again with a vaſt Abundance and Increaſe. While he was thus diſcourſing of his Death, he ſeemed on a Sudden to be ſeized with a natural Horror at his approaching Hour; and was going to requeſt of God a Reprieve from it; but then recollecting, that for this Purpoſe it was, that he came into the World, he changed his Petition, and with a reſolved Acquieſcence in his good Pleaſure, deſired of him, in what Method he ſhould think moſt proper, to glorify his Name; whereupon he was anſwered by a Voice from Heaven (which ſome of the Company took for a Clap of Thunder, and others for an Angel's Speaking to him) "that he had glorified it, and would glorify it again."

This Voice, he told them, was not ſo much for his Information in the Will of Heaven, as it was for their Conviction of his divine Miſſion; and ſo he went on diſcourſing to them of his Death, and the beneficial Effects of it, until ſome of them perceiving, in what he ſaid, an Inconſiſtency (as they thought) with ſome Paſſages of Scripture, told him, that they could not rightly comprehend what he meant by Death, ſince ſome Prophecies had aſſured them, that the Meſſiah was to live for ever. But to this Objection he made no other Reply, than that it well behoved them to make good Uſe of his Inſtructions, for the ſhort Time they were to have them; and ſo he withdrew from them, as well perceiving that neither his divine Diſcourſes, nor miraculous Cures could gain the Faith of any, except the Populace; for tho' ſome of their Rulers did believe in him, yet ſuch was their Timidity, that they durſt not declare it openly, for fear of Excommunication, and becauſe "they loved the Praiſe of Men, more than the Praiſe of God."

Towards the Evening, however, he returned again to the Temple, and exhorted the People to believe in him, as a Meſſenger ſent from God to offer Salvation to Mankind; and in caſe that they perſiſted in their Infidelity, he threatened them with divine Vengeance in the laſt Day, when the very Goſpel, which he then preached to them, would riſe up in Judgment againſt them, and condemn them: and with theſe Words he left the Temple, and taking his Apoſtles with him, returned to Bethany, where he lodged that Night.

The next Morning, as he returned to Jeruſalem, finding himſelf a little hungry,

hungry, he went to a Fig-tree, that was in the Way, in hopes of finding ſome Fruit upon it: But when he found none, to ſignify his Almighty Power, he curſed the Tree; and ſo proceeding to the Temple, began again to clear it of all the Traders that were got again into it, and there continued all the Day long, teaching and inſtructing the People. While he was doing this, the chief Prieſts, Scribes and Rulers of the People, knowing that he had no Commiſſion from the Sanhedrim, came and demanded of him, by what Authority he proceeded in that Manner; but, inſtead of anſwering their Queſtion directly, he put another to them, viz. Whether the Baptiſm of John was of divine, or only of human Inſtitution? To ſay that it was of divine Inſtitution, would be to accuſe themſelves of Impiety, and Incredulity; and to ſay that it was purely human, would be to provoke the People (who all looked upon him as a Prophet) to ſtone them; and therefore, in this Dilemma, they concluded, that Ignorance would be the beſt Anſwer, and thereupon declared, that they could not tell; to which our Saviour rejoined, "Neither is it neceſſary for me to give you an Account of my Commiſſion and Authority, ſince you ſeem to grant, that a Man may lawfully preach and baptize, and entertain Diſciples, as John did, without the Appointment and Permiſſion of the Sanhedrim." And ſo he proceeded in ſeveral Parables (ſuch as the Parable of the two Sons, that of the wicked Huſbandmen, and that of the Gueſts invited to the Marriage Feaſt) to upbraid them with their Hypocriſy, Cruelty, and Contempt of Religion, and for theſe to denounce the ſevere Judgments of God againſt them.

Now let us explain what we have thus far advanced.

The Money-changers, whoſe Tables our Saviour overthrew, were not unlike our Merchants or Bankers, who deal in Bills of Exchange, and either remit Money to foreign Places, or anſwer ſuch Draughts, as, by their Correſpondents abroad, are made upon them: And conſidering that the Jews (how far ſoever they lived from it) were obliged to repair to Jeruſalem, there to offer their Sacrifices, and pay their half Shekel, for the Uſe of the Temple, Exod. xxx. 13. the Inſtitution of ſuch Dealers in Money was highly neceſſary, that the Jews, in their ſeveral Diſperſions, who were to come up to Jeruſalem to worſhip, paying their Money to the Merchants at home, might have it, to anſwer their Occaſions, ſafe from Thieves, and from the Trouble of Carriage, when they arrived at Jeruſalem. Whether therefore the Buſineſs of theſe Money-changers was only to return Money from diſtant Parts, or to change foreign Money into current Coin, or larger Money into leſs Pieces, or perhaps to do all this, there was certainly nothing blame-worthy in the Profeſſion, had it not been for ſome intervening Abuſe. In like Manner, it may be ſaid of thoſe, who bought or ſold Cattle for Sacrifices; ſince it would have been highly inconvenient for every Worſhipper, who lived

lived at a conſiderable Diſtance, to bring them up with him, ſuch Men were neceſſary in their Way, as were likewiſe the Sellers of Doves, becauſe every Iſraelite did not keep this Kind of Birds, and yet no one Creature was ſo often required in Sacrifice, as they. Our Saviour therefore, in this Tranſaction, muſt not be thought to blame all ſuch Traffick in general, but only to find Fault in the People for having taken up an improper Place for the Exerciſe of their reſpective Callings: And therefore, to let them know, that it was not out of Paſſion, or any peeviſh Reſentment againſt them, but purely in Obedience to a divine Command, that he made this Reformation, he told them, that it was written, "My Houſe ſhall be called an Houſe of Prayer." This is the Character which the Prophet Iſaiah gives of it, Chap. lvi. 7. and if it be an Houſe appointed for Prayer, and other religious Offices, then is it no proper Place for the Tables of Money-changers, and the Seats of thoſe that ſell Doves, who have the Markets of Jeruſalem, and their own Shops and Houſes to trade in.

The Expreſſion, A Den of Thieves, is thought by ſome to be an Alluſion to thoſe Gangs of Robbers, which, at this Time, infeſted Judea, and uſed to hide themſelves in Holes, and Dens of the Mountains, as appears from the Hiſtory of Joſephus in ſeveral Places: But our Lord here plainly refers to that Paſſage in Jeremiah, where the Prophet introduces God Complaining, "Is this Houſe, which is called by my Name, become a Den of Robbers in your Eyes? Behold, I even have ſeen it, ſaith the Lord," Chap. vii. 11. But how could the Houſe of God become a Den of Robbers? How could ſuch Violence be committed in ſo ſacred a Place? St. Jerom, in his Commentary upon Matth. xxi. 12, 13. aſcribes all this to the Avarice of the Prieſts, and gives us a lively Deſcription of the ſeveral Artifices, whereby they endeavoured to enrich themſelves: "In the Temple of Jeruſalem, ſays he, the fineſt, and the moſt ſpacious in the whole World, whither Jews aſſembled almoſt from all Countries, Sacrifices of different Kinds, ſome from the Rich, and others from the poorer Sort, were preſcribed by the Law; but, becauſe, thoſe who came from afar, often wanted ſuch Sacrifices, the Prieſts took the Advantage to buy up all theſe Beaſts, which were appointed for this Purpoſe; and, having ſold them to thoſe that wanted, received them at their Hands back again. Becauſe ſome, who came to worſhip, were ſo very poor, that they had not Money enough to purchaſe ſo much as the leſſer Sacrifices, which were Birds; to remedy this Inconveniency, the Prieſts ſet up Bankers in one of the Courts of the Temple, to lend them Money upon Security: But, finding that they could not do this, without tranſgreſſing the Law, which forbad Uſury, they had Recourſe to another Device, which was to appoint a Kind of Pawnbrokers, inſtead of Bankers, i. e. Men, who, for the Advance of a ſmall Sum, took Fruits, Herbs, and other Conſumables, inſtead of

of Uſe-Money. Our Lord therefore having obſerved this Way of Traffick, which the Prieſts had ſet up in his Father's Houſe, not only expelled their Agents, but arraigned them likewiſe for a Pack of Thieves, "for he is a Robber, ſays the Father, who makes Lucre of Religion, and whoſe Worſhip is, not ſo much of the Veneration he has for God, as the Opportunity of making his own Intereſt and Advantage."

Theſe Words, "Out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings thou haſt perfected Praiſe," are cited from Pſal. viii. 2. and ſeem to vary a little from the Original, which is thus rendered, "Out of the Mouth of the very Babes and Sucklings thou haſt ordained Strength." But, when it is conſidered, that the only Strength, which can proceed from the Mouth of Children, muſt be Praiſe, or Words put into their Mouths, to celebrate the Praiſes of the Meſſiah, the Praiſe in the Pſalmiſt, and in the Evangeliſt, muſt needs mean the ſame Thing; and our Saviour, in the Application of it to the chief Prieſts and Scribes, ſeems to inſinuate, "That the Acclamations of the Children were not fortuitous, but by a divine Inſtinct, and for the fulfilling of an ancient Prophecy; and that therefore their declaring him to be the Meſſiah, or the Son of David, ſhould be looked upon as a Kind of a Call from Heaven, to inform and inſtruct them in what they were to do."

Who the Grecians were, who reſorted to Jeruſalem to worſhip, the beſt of our Commentators are not agreed. Some are of Opinion that they were mere Gentiles, who either out of Curioſity, viz. to ſee the Magnificence of the Temple, the Solemnities of the Feaſt, or the Perſon of Jeſus, of whoſe Fame they had heard ſo much; or perhaps out of a Principle of Devotion, and to worſhip the God of Iſrael, might at this Time, reſort to Jeruſalem: For the Pagan Religion, which admitted a Plurality of Gods, reſtrained none, as they were not thereby tempted to abandon thoſe of their own. Others imagine, that they were real Jews, who being ſcattered in Grecian Provinces, after the Conqueſts, which Alexander the Great, and his Succeſſors made of the Jews, ſtill continued in thoſe Countries, but kept ſo cloſe to their ancient Religion, as to come in great Numbers, to Jeruſalem, upon the Return of every Paſſover. Theſe were generally called Helleniſts: And, that there was great Plenty of them in their ſeveral Provinces of Aſia is manifeſt from St. Peter's Addreſs of his firſt Epiſtle to the Strangers (as he calls them) who were ſcattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia, Minor, and Bithynia, 1 Pet. i. 1. but the moſt general Opinion is, that theſe Greeks were Proſelytes of the Gate, who worſhipped the God of Heaven and Earth, lived among the Jews, and conformed to their political Laws, but would not engage in Circumciſion, or the Obſervance of their Ceremonies; and they came to Jeruſalem at this Time, not becauſe they were permitted to celebrate the Feaſt along with the Jews, but becauſe they were indulged the Privi-

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lege to behold their Solemnities, and to pay their Adorations to the Creator of the Univerſe (even while the Jews were in the Height of their publick Worſhip) in the Court of the Gentiles, as appears from the Caſe of the Eunuch of Queen Candace, Acts viii. 27.

Theſe Greeks, ſays Grotius, ſeem to have been Syrophœnicians, who dwelt perhaps about Tyre and Sidon, and ſo might eaſily be acquainted with the Galileans, with whom they had Commerce, and with Philip of Bethſaida, to whom they made Application for Acceſs to Chriſt.

Our Saviour's Words, upon comparing his Death to Corn ſown in the Ground, are not amiſs paraphraſed in this Manner, "Look, as you ſee in your ordinary Huſbandry, the Grains of Wheat are firſt buried in the Earth, and loſe their Form, before they ſpring and ſhoot up again, and bring forth Fruit; ſo it muſt be with me. I muſt be firſt lifted up, before I ſhall draw Men after me; I muſt firſt be crucified, before my Goſpel ſhall be preached to all Nations, and the Fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in: But when I am dead, and have riſen, then ſhall ye bear abundant Fruit."

That Men might not have it to ſay, that our Bleſſed Saviour, in Point of Suffering, was no proper Example for our Imitation, becauſe he had no Dread of Death, or Senſe of Pain, to make Sufferings diſtaſteful to him, whereas we are moſt tenderly affected with theſe Things, he herein ſhews us, that he had the ſame natural Concern for Life, and Dread of Death, that we have, only that he over-ruled them by a Deſire of promoting his Father's Glory.

The only Way of Revelation, which the Jews, ſince the Babyloniſh Captivity and Extinction of their Prophets, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi, pretend to, is that of Bath-Koll, or the Daughter of a Voice, ſo called, becauſe it has ſome Reſemblance (though as to its Diſtinctneſs, but an imperfect one) of that Voice, which was uttered from the Holy of Holies, when the Lord ſpake to Moſes; and (according to them) it is the Will of God revealed in Thunder from Heaven; and therefore, when our Saviour was anſwered by a Voice from Heaven, ſome of the Company thought it thundered, and others, that an Angel ſpake, yet neither of them were miſtaken, becauſe in this Bath-Koll, there was alſo Thunder joined with an articulate Voice.

"I have glorified it" (meaning his Name) by cauſing my Glory to be publiſhed and proclaimed in the World, by thy Preaching, and by the Miracles which I have given in Teſtimony of thy Miſſion; and I will glorify it again, by thy Reſurrection and Exaltation to the Right-hand of Glory, by the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon thy Apoſtles, and by their carrying the Sounds of the Goſpel even unto the Ends of the Earth.

The Prophecies, from whence the Jews may be ſuppoſed to have drawn the Concluſion, that the Meſſiah was to live for ever, are, 2 Sam. vii. 16. where God, by the Mouth of Nathan, promiſes David, "Thine Houſe, and

thy Kingdom ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever before thee, thy Throne ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever;" in much the ſame Words, wherein he had ſworn unto David himſelf, Pſal. lxxxix. 30. "His Seed will I make to endure for ever, and his Throne as the Days of Heaven." To the ſame Purpoſe they found the Prophet Iſaiah promiſing, Chap. ix. 7. "My Servant David ſhall be their King for ever, and of his Government there ſhall be no End:" But what ſeemed to expreſs the Matter in the cleareſt Terms, was this Paſſage in Daniel, Chap. vii. 13, 14. "And, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, &c. and there was given him Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom, &c. his Dominion is an everlaſting Dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his Kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed." Thus the Jews wrongfully applied to the Perſon of the Meſſiah, the Things, which related to his Kingdom; but then they gave little or no Heed to what the ſame Prophets ſaid of the Body, wherein the Meſſiah was to ſuffer, and of his Hands and Feet, which were to be pierced, Pſal. xxii. 18. xl. 6. of his giving up his Life a Sacrifice for Sin, Iſaiah liii. 12. and of his being cut off, but not for himſelf. Dan. ix. 26. all which was not incompatible with his abiding for ever, ſeeing that, after his Sufferings, he was to riſe again, Pſal. xli. 10. and enter into Glory, 1 Pet. i. 11. So that, by comparing theſe Things together, they might have as eaſily removed this Scruple, eſpecially when he had told them ſo often, and they ſo well remembered that he had told them, that, after three Days, he would riſe again.

It is pretended by ſome, that the Perſon, who preached in the Temple, was to have a Licence from the Sanhedrim, but that any might ſpeak publickly in the Synagogues without any ſuch Authority; becauſe we find our Saviour preaching in the latter; almoſt every Sabbath-day, without any Moleſtation. However this be, 'tis certainly a vain Queſtion, for the Chief Prieſts and Rulers to aſk our Lord, by whoſe Authority he did thoſe Things, after they had ſeen his Miracles, and knew that he claimed his Commiſſion from God.

By the Man in the Parable, is ſignified God, and by his two Sons, the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews are the ſecond Son; they promiſed to God a perfect Obedience, and yet did nothing: The Gentiles are the other Son, who, at firſt, refuſed to obey and gave themſelves up to Idolatry, and all Manner of Wickedneſs, but upon the Preaching of the Goſpel, repented; and, after their Converſion, applied themſelves in earneſt to do the Will of God. The Parable, according to our Lord's own Interpretation of it, Matt. xxi 32. is applicable likewiſe to two Kinds of Jews, the Scribes and Phariſees, who pretended to ſo much Religion, and ſuch mighty Zeal for the Performance of the Law, when in Reality, they obſerved none of its weightier Precepts; and the Publicans and Sinners, who though at firſt they

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lived in Practices quite abhorrent to the Precepts of Religion, yet, upon the Preaching of John the Baptiſt, were ſeveral of them converted, and attending to the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, in Proceſs of Time, became obedient to their heavenly Will, ver. 31.

For the Explication of the Parable of the wicked Huſbandmen, we muſt obſerve, that the Houſeholder here, Matt. xxi. 33. is Almighty God, and the Vineyard is the Jewiſh People, conſidered in their ſpiritual Capacity; that his planting and hedging it about, ſignifies his peculiar Favour and Providence, in communicating to them his Will, and by the Laws and Ordinances peculiar to themſelves, diſtinguiſhing them from all other Nations, to be his own People; that the Winepreſs and Tower, and other ſuitable Conveniences, denote the Temple and Altar, which he built among them, together with all thoſe Advantages and Opportunities of ſerving him acceptably which he afforded them; that the Huſbandmen, to whom this Vineyard was let out, were the Prieſts and Levites, the Doctors and Rulers of that Church and People, who are here repreſented wanting in their Duty, and negligent in cultivating the Vineyard, or inſtructing the People committed to their Charge; that the Fruits are no other than Returns of Duty, proportioned to the Advantages of knowing, and perfoming; that the Servants ſent to demand the Fruits, were the Prophets, whom God, from Time to Time, commiſſioned to reprove, exhort, and quicken to their Duty, both Prieſts and People, by Denunciations of Vengeance, and Promiſes of Reward; that the Son, whom he ſent at laſt, was our Bleſſed Saviour, whom the Jewiſh Prieſts and Rulers treated in no better Manner, than they had done Prophets of old; but, inſtead of reverencing him as the Son of God, and as he proved himſelf to be by divers Manifeſtations of divine Power, put him to a cruel and ignominious Death; and therefore well might the Lord of the Vineyard deſtroy theſe wicked Men, &c. as we find from the Jewiſh Hiſtorian Joſephus, as well as other Writers, that God, for their Impiety, brought the Roman Armies upon that Nation, and by them, burnt their City and Temple, deſtroyed and diſperſed the People, and carried his Goſpel to the "Gentiles, the other Huſbandmen, who ſhould render him the Fruits in their Seaſon," ver. 41.

The King, in the Parable of the Marriage Feaſt, repreſents God the Father; the Son, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; (who is frequently deſcribed as the Spouſe of his Church) and the Marriage Feaſt, the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel. The Gueſts, that were at firſt invited to the Feaſt, were the Jews; the Servants ſent forth to call them, were the Prophets, John the Baptiſt, and the Apoſtles; upon their Refuſal, the other Gueſts, brought in to ſupply their Room, were the Gentiles; and the Perſon who wanted the Wedding-Garment, is an Emblem of all thoſe, who profeſs and receive, but do not live up to the Principles of Chriſt's Religion.

Here let us reſume the Story.

The Phariſees, who had as great a Share in the Application of theſe Parables, as any other, went away much enraged, and with a firm Reſolution to find out ſome Occaſion againſt him. To this Purpoſe therefore, they ſent ſome of their Diſciples, together with the Herodians, to propound this inſidious Queſtion to him, Whether it was lawful for them to pay Tribute to Cæſar, or not? never doubting, but that, which way ſoever he anſwered, his Buſineſs was done; if in the Affirmative, the Multitude would deteſt him, as a Betrayer of their ancient Liberties; if in the Negative, the Herodians would then accuſe him, as a Rebel againſt the Emperor Tiberius: But he, knowing their treacherous Deſign, demanded a Sight of the Tribute-money, and when they acknowledged that the Signature on it was Cæſar's, he ſent them away, quite confounded with this Anſwer, "Render therefore unto Cæſar, the Things that are Cæſar's, and unto God, the Things that are God's."

Upon the Defeat given to theſe two Parties, the Sadduces came to him with a Queſtion, and a Difficulty that they thought inſurmountable. For, as they had no Belief of a Reſurrection, they put a Caſe to him of one Woman, who, according to the Direction of their Law, had been married to ſeven Brothers ſucceſſively, and thereupon deſire to know whoſe Wife ſhe was to be at the general Reſurrection? In Anſwer to which our Lord gave them to underſtand, that though Marriage was neceſſary in this State, in order to raiſe up a Poſterity to mortal Man, yet that after the Reſurrection, Men would be immortal and live like Angels, devoid of Paſſions, and incapable of Decay; and then proved the Reality of the Reſurrection from one of God's Appellations, in a Book, which themſelves allowed to be canonical,

The Phariſees, hearing the Sadducees were ſilenced, began to rally again: and one of their Doctors in hopes to enſnare our Saviour, in caſe he ſhould prefer one Part of the Law above another, deſired to know his Opinion, which was to be the greateſt Commandment of all? Whereupon our Lord reduced the whole Law to two general Precepts, of equal Obligation to all Mankind, the Love of God above all Things, and the Love of our Neighbour as ourſelves; in the former of which we obey the firſt, and in the latter the ſecond Table of the Law; and with this Anſwer the Doctor was well pleaſed. When our Saviour had thus reſolved all their Queſtions, he in his Turn, at laſt, put this one to them, viz. In what Senſe the Meſſiah could be David's Son, when David himſelf, by divine Inſpiration, called him his Lord? But to this they could give no Anſwer, becauſe they were ignorant, that the Meſſiah, as God, was really the Lord of David, but as Man, and deſcended from his Family, he was his Son: And after theſe Diſputes (which were the laſt he had with them) he went again, in the Evening, with his Diſciples to Bethany.

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Here it may be proper to take a Review of the foregoing Period of our Hiſtory.

The Herodians are commonly, and moſt probably, ſuppoſed to ſignify the Partiſans, and Favourers of Herod; but what their Principle was, as to the Matter now in hand, it is not ſo generally agreed. Some think them Enemies to the Roman Government, and that they only watched a favourable Opportunity to make Herod's Family abſolute. Others think them intirely in the Intereſt of the Emperor, as Herod himſelf then was; for having, by his Indulgence, been advanced to the Regal State, he acted for and under him, in collecting the Cuſtoms and publick Dues. This Opinion ſeems the more probable, becauſe it is more agreeable to the Phariſees preſent Deſign: For, had they ſent Perſons all of one Sentiment, Chriſt might eaſily have ſatisfied them all; but now, by ſending Men of different Judgments, they made it impoſſible for him to content both Parties; ſince, in determining for the Payment of the Tribute, he muſt have given Offence to the Phariſees, and, in Effect, renounced thoſe Liberties and Privileges, which ſome of the Jewiſh Doctors inſiſted upon; and, in pronouncing againſt it, he was ſure to incur the Herodians Diſpleaſure, and make himſelf obnoxious to the Juriſdiction of the Civil Sword. The Herodians therefore may well be preſumed to have been Perſons of a Principle different to the Phariſees, whoſe Addreſs and Cunning, upon this Occaſion, ſeems to have lain chiefly in the Management of the Meſſengers.

The State of the Queſtion, Whether it was lawful for them to pay Tribute to Cæſar, or not, truly taken, ſeems to be this;—The Government of the Jews had fallen into the Hands of the Maccabees, and in Succeſſion, to one of them, named Alexander. He had two Sons, Hyrcanus, and Ariſtobulus, the younger of which made War upon the elder, and aſſumed to himſelf the Government. Hyrcanus, and his Party, being not able to reſiſt him, called in the Aſſiſtance of the Romans. Pompey, at their Requeſt, beſieges Jeruſalem, and had the Gates ſurrendered to him by a Faction within, that favoured Hyrcanus, but Ariſtobulus and his Adherents fought it out, till, at laſt, they were vanquiſhed and overpowered. The Romans put Hyrcanus in Poſſeſſion of the Government; but, at the ſame Time obliged him to hold it by their Favour and Permiſſion, which laid the Foundation of great and laſting Diſſentions among the Jews; ſome ſubmitting to the Roman Power, as thinking they had a fair Title both by Conqueſt and Surrender; while others objected, that the Surrender was made by a Party only, and not the whole Body of the People; that it was not Conqueſt, but Treachery, which brought Jeruſalem to their Mercy; and, conſequently, that they were Uſurpers, and Hyrcanus and his Followers, Betrayers of their Country. That which contributed not a little to make this Controverſy ſtill greater, was, what Joſephus

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and Euſebius relate concerning Judas the Gaulonite. He about the Time of the Taxation, in which (as St. Luke ſays) our Saviour was born, diſquieted the Minds of many, and repreſented the Decree of Auguſtus for that Purpoſe, as a Mark of Infamy and Servitude not to be borne. This Man is ſaid to have inſtituted a particular Sect, one of whoſe Tenets was, That no Jew ought to pay Tribute, or to acknowledge any Sovereign Lord, but God only, and that they were his peculiar People, and therefore bound to maintain their Liberty, eſpecially againſt profane and uncircumciſed Pretenders, ſuch as the Roman Emperors were. So that, the paying of Tribute to Cæſar, was not, at this Time, a Queſtion of meer Curioſity, but a Matter of Moment, with regard to Practice; nor was it a Point of Bravery only, in the Eſteem of the Phariſees, and others of that Party, but a Scruple of Conſcience, and a Debate of Religion, whether this Tribute ſhould be paid or not.

Every one knows that the Roman Emperors were wont to diſperſe their Money through all the Provinces belonging to their Juriſdiction; that this Money was ſtamped with the Image, or Buſt of the Emperor, on one Side; and on the Reverſe, with ſome Figure or other, repreſenting Victory, Plenty, Peace, or the like; and that this Tribute, or Capitation-Tax, (which, according to Ulpian, the Males from fourteen, and the Females from twelve Years old, were obliged to pay) was uſually collected in this Money, and no other, as the only current Coin at Rome.

Some Interpreters are of Opinion, that our Saviour's Words do not determine Cæſar's Right to demand Tribute; but, ſince the Jews had now ſubmitted to the Roman Government (as they had formerly done to the Aſſyrian) which national Submiſſion (with Promiſe of Fidelity) having now obtained an hundred Years, was a juſt Ground for Cæſar's Right; ſince, beſides this, Cæſar had indulged them in the Exerciſe of their Religion, and Enjoyment of their Civil Rights; had fought their Battles, and protected them againſt the common Enemy, the Arabians, and Parthians, and the like; ſince, more eſpecially, it was a received Maxim among the Jews, that wherever the Money of any Perſon was owned, as the current Coin of the Kingdom, there the Inhabitants acknowledged that Perſon to be their Lord and Governor; and ſince the Jews accepted, and trafficked with Cæſar's Money, and held it current in all their Payments; our Saviour's Anſwer, "Render therefore to Cæſar," which is founded upon their own Principles, muſt needs be deemed a poſitive Declaration of Cæſar's Right to receive Tribute, and ſuch other Acknowledgments, as belonged to the State and Dignity of the Poſt, wherein Providence had placed him. It might indeed be objected (ſays Grotius, on Matt. xxii. 20.) that the Romans ruled over the Jews, and Cæſar over the Romans, in Fact only, and

and without any Right to do ſo, but Chriſt ſhews, that this Objection ſignifies nothing to the Matter in hand: For, ſince Peace cannot be ſecured without Forces, nor Forces had without Pay, nor Pay without Taxes or Tribute; it follows, that Tribute ought to be paid to the Perſon actually governing (ſo long as he continues to govern) in Conſideration of the common Safety, and Protection, which are ſecured by the preſent Poſſeſſor of the Government, whoever that Poſſeſſor be.

The Diſcourſe of the Sadducees was founded upon this Miſtake,—That, if there ſhould be a Reſurrection of the Bodies, there would neceſſarily follow a Revival of the Relations likewiſe, and that the State of the World to come would be like the State of this preſent World, in which for the Propagation and Continuance of Mankind, Men and Women marry, and are given in Marriage; which groſs Notion of theirs our Saviour endeavours to rectify.

The Words, which our Saviour produces in Proof of the Reſurrection, are thoſe which God uſes to Moſes, "I am the God of thy Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob, Exod. iii. 6. and the Argument which is implied in them is this,—That, ſince to be the God of any one is a fœderal Expreſſion, which denotes God to be a kind Benefactor who either doth, or will do good to ſuch Perſons, as are in his Favour, and under his Protection; ſince "God is not the God of the Dead," and can have a Regard or Conſideration of ſuch, as are mere Non-Entities, or ſo dead, as never to return to Life again; and ſince, in this Life, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, received no ſuch ſignal Kindneſſes from the Almighty, as anſwers the emphatical Expreſſion of his being their God, it muſt neceſſarily follow, that God, in declaring himſelf to be their God, did ſolemnly engage to make them happy after this Life, according to what the Author to the Hebrews obſerves, "Wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God, in that he hath prepared for them a City," Heb. xi. 16. This way of arguing was of great Force againſt the Sadducees, who denied the Immortality of the Soul, as well as the Reſurrection of the Body; and, at the ſame Time, it fully proves the Reſurrection of the Body: For, ſince the Souls of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, were not the intire Perſons of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, which conſiſted of Bodies as well as Souls, it would from hence follow, that God could truly be their God, i. e. their Rewarder and bounteous Benefactor, no other Way, than by a Reſurrection of their Bodies, to be re-united to their proper Souls.

The Perſon, whom we here render Doctor, is by St. Matthew, xxii. 28. called a Lawyer, and by St. Luke, xx. 29. a Scribe; but in this Diverſity of Words there is no Difference of Senſe; For Scribes were of two Sorts, or had at leaſt two Offices; the one was, to ſit in the Chair of Moſes, Matthew xxiii. 2. i. e. to read and interpret the Law of Moſes to the People; the other, to expound to them the Traditions, which they pretended to have received from their

their Forefathers. The Name of Scribe they ſeem to have derived from Ezra, (about five hundred Years before Chriſt) who is ſo frequently ſtiled, "A Scribe of the Law of the Lord, who read in the Book of the Law, and expounded it," Ezra vii. 12. Neh. xii. 26. and viii. 2. &c. And, becauſe the Traditions which they taught, and obliged the People to obſerve, were called Laws, they thence had the Appellation of Lawyers: And as ſome of the Scribes were the Perſons appointed to copy out the Bible for ſuch as had Occaſion for it, and to take Care of the Preſervation of the Purity of the Text; ſo others employed themſelves in taking the like Pains about the Traditions of the Elders, and from thence very likely (though they were all the ſame Order of Men) they might have different Denominations.

The Queſtion that this Jewiſh Doctor put to our Saviour, viz. "Which was to be accounted the greateſt Commandment of all?" was no frivolous or impertinent one, but what, at this Time, divided the greateſt Part of the learned Men among the Jews; ſome giving the Preference to the Obſervation of the Sabbath; others to the Ordinance of Circumciſion, and others to the Precept of Sacrifices; never conſidering the great Command recorded in Deut. vi. 5. "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might," or that other, recorded in Lev. xix. 18. "Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf," until our Saviour reminded them of them.

That by our Neighbour here, we are to underſtand every other Perſon, who is capable of Kindneſs from us, or ſtands in need of our Help, is evident from our Saviour's Determination, in the Caſe of the Jew and the good Samaritan, from the Example we are called upon to imitate in this Affection, viz. the Love of God and our bleſſed Saviour; and from theſe Evangelical Precepts, which extend this Duty to all Men: But by the "loving our Neighbours as ourſelves," it is not required, either that we ſhould love him from the ſame inward Principles, which excite our Affection to ourſelves, or that we ſhould love him in the ſame Degree and Proportion that we love ourſelves, but only that we ſhould make the Affection which we bear to ourſelves, the Rule we are to follow, in expreſſing our Love to him; or (in other Words) that we ſhould love him in all the Inſtances wherein we expreſs our Love to ourſelves, though not in an equal Meaſure.

The Words in the Text are, "On theſe two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets," Matthew xxii. 40. which are a Metaphor, taken from the Cuſtom mentioned by Tertullian of hanging up their Laws in a publick Place to be ſeen of all Men; and import, that in them is contained all that the Law and Prophets do require, in Reference to our Duty to God and Man. For, though there be ſome Precepts of Temperance, which we owe to ourſelves, yet they are ſuch, as we may be moved to perform from the true Love of God,

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and of our Neighbour. For the Love of God will preſerve us from all Impatience, Diſcontent, and evil Luſtings. It will make us watchful over ourſelves to keep a good Conſcience, as being ſolicitous for our eternal Welfare: And the Love of our Neighbour will reſtrain us from all angry Paſſions, ſuch as Envy, Malice, and other Perturbations, which ariſe againſt him; ſo that theſe two Commandments may be very juſtly called an Abridgment, or Compendium of the whole Scripture.

But to return to the Hiſtory from whence our Explanations have made us digreſs.

On the next Morning, as our Lord was returning to Jeruſalem the third Time, the Apoſtles, obſerving that the Fig-tree, which he had curſed the Day before, was withered away, and dead to the very Root, took Notice of it to him, as a Thing very ſtrange and ſurprizing; whereupon he exhorted them to have ſtedfaſt Faith in God, Fervency and Perſeverance in their Prayers, and a forgiving Temper to thoſe that had offended them, in order to make their Prayers accepted, and then they ſhould not fail, in the Courſe of their Miniſtry, to perform as great, or greater Miracles than this.

When our Lord was come into the Temple, he began to teach the People, as he had done the Day before; and, to raiſe an Averſion in his Diſciples, and in all that heard him, to the Principles and Practices of the Scribes and Phariſees, he took the Freedom to expoſe their Vices without Reſerve; their Pride, their Hypocriſy, their Covetouſneſs, their Hard-heartedneſs to Parents, Impiety to God, and Cruelty to his faithful Servants; and upon his mentioning this laſt Particular, he brake out into the ſame pathetick Exclamation againſt Jeruſalem, for her murdering the Prophets, and other Meſſengers ſent from God, that had been the Matter of his frequent Lamentations before.

Before he left the Temple, he took Notice, how the People threw their Money into the Treaſury; and among many, who offered very plentifully, obſerving a poor Woman caſt in her two Mites (which amount to no more than a Farthing) he called his Apoſtles, and aſſured them, that that poor Woman had been more liberal than any of the reſt, becauſe their Oblations proceeded from their Superfluity, but ſhe from her Indigence had given all ſhe had.

In the Afternoon, as they were returning to Bethany, his Apoſtles took a View of the ſeveral Buildings of the Temple, and were making their Remarks on the Largeneſs of its Stones, the Richneſs of its Ornaments, and the Beauty and Statelineſs of the whole; when our Saviour acquainted them, that, how glorious ſoever it might appear at preſent, it would not be long before the whole Structure ſhould be ſo intirely ruined, that there ſhould "not ſo much as one Stone be left upon another."

The general Notion was, that this Temple was to laſt even unto the End of the World. And therefore when

our Saviour had ſeated himſelf upon Mount Olivet, in full View and Proſpect of it, his Apoſtles deſired to know, when this Deſtruction would happen, and what would be the previous Signs of it. The Signs of it, he told them, would be the Coming of many Impoſtors, and falſe Chriſts, the Rumours of Wars, and Famines, and Peſtilences, dreadful Earthquakes, Prodigies and amazing Sights in the Air, the Perſecution of Chriſtians, and the Propagation of the Goſpel all the World over: But that they might eſcape the Calamity, which would ſuddenly come upon their Country, and utterly deſtroy the Jewiſh State and Government, he advertiſed them, that, whenever they ſhould ſee the City of Jeruſalem inveſted with Armies, and the Temple polluted with Abominations, they might then conclude, that this Diſſolution was approaching, and that therefore it was high Time for them to provide for their Safety, by a quick Retreat.

Of the preciſe Time of its coming, however, no created Being (as he told them) could certainly know; and therefore it was incumbent upon them, to keep themſelves in a State of perpetual Watchfulneſs, in a faithful Diſcharge of their reſpective Duties, in a conſtant Perſeverance in Prayer to God; all which he endeavoured to inforce with ſeveral Parables, ſuch as that of the faithful Servant, whom his Maſter, at his Return from a Journey, found employed in his proper Buſineſs, when he of a contrary Character was ſurprized in his Riot and Debaucheries, and accordingly puniſhed; that of the wiſe and fooliſh Virgins, who were differently prepared at the Coming of the Bridegroom; and that of the Talents, intruſted with diligent and ſlothful Servants. And, as this Deſtruction of Jeruſalem was no ſmall Emblem of the final Conſummation of all Things, from hence he proceeds to deſcribe, the Manner of his Coming to the laſt and general Judgment, when, ſurrounded with the refulgent Rays of his Majeſty, and ſeated upon his bright Throne of Glory, with all the holy Angels of Heaven attending him, he ſhall ſummons all the People, that ever lived in the World, to appear before him; and having made Inquiſition into the Diſcharge of the great Duty of Charity, ſhall puniſh or reward Mankind, according as he finds that they have acquitted themſelves in this Reſpect.

The following Obſervations will explain the Difficulties in the foregoing Paſſages.

'Tis remarked of our bleſſed Saviour's Miracles, that they were all Works of Mercy and Beneficence; and that, if any of them had a contrary Tendency, they were always ſhewn upon brute and inanimate Creatures, and that too, not without a charitable Intent of conveying ſome ſymbolical Inſtruction to the Spectators, as this Withering of the Fig-tree was to repreſent to the Jewiſh Nation their approaching Doom.

The Command to forgive thoſe that have offended us, before we pray, not only

only ſhews, that no Reſentment of what our Brother hath done ſhould ſtick long upon our Spirit, becauſe they indiſpoſe us for that Duty, which we ought to be continually prepared for, but that there is likewiſe ſome kind of Forgiveneſs to be exerciſed, even towards him that does not aſk it, nor ſhew any Tokens of his Repentance, viz. that we ſhould not only free our Minds from all Deſires of Revenge, and ſo far forget the Injury, as not to upbraid him with it, but be inclined likewiſe to ſhew him Kindneſs, and ready to do him any good Turn: For what the Law required of a Jew to do to his Enemy's Beaſt, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. that, without all Controverſy, the Goſpel requires of a Chriſtian to do to his offending Brother.

It was a common Saying among the Jews, when they were minded to commend any of their Doctors for his great Dexterity in ſolving difficult Queſtions, that "ſuch an one was a Rooter up of Mountains;" and, in Alluſion to this Adage, our Saviour tells his Diſciples, that "if they had Faith, they might ſay to a Mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the Sea, and it ſhould be done," Matt. xxi. 21. i. e. that, in Confirmation of the Chriſtian Faith they ſhould be able to do the moſt difficult Things. For, beſides that our Saviour's Words are not to be taken in a literal Senſe, they are likewiſe to be reſtrained to the Age of Miracles, and to the Perſons to whom they were ſpoken, viz. the Apoſtles, and firſt Propagators of the Chriſtian Religion, becauſe Experience teaches us, that this is no ordinary and ſtanding Gift belonging to the Church.

The firſt Inſtitution of the Jewiſh Treaſury, we find in 2 Kings xii. 9. where it is ſaid, that "Jehoiada the Prieſt took a Cheſt, and bored an Hole in the Lid of it, and ſet it before the Altar, on the Right-ſide, as one goeth into the Houſe of the Lord, and the Prieſts, that kept the Door, put therein all the Money, that was brought into the Houſe." This Money was, at that Time, given for the Reparation of the Temple, and in after Ages, the Money caſt into the Treaſury, even in our Saviour's Time, was deſigned not only for the Relief of the Poor, but for ſacred Uſes, and the adorning of the Temple; which might occaſion Joſephus to ſay, That the Temple was built not only with the Bounty of Herod, but with the Money contained in the holy Treaſury likewiſe, and with the Tributes, which were ſent from all Parts of the World.

Joſephus, who gives us a Deſcription of the Temple built by Herod, tells us, among other Things, that "the whole Fabrick was made of durable white Stone, ſome of which were five and twenty Cubits long, eight in Height, and twelve in Breadth."

The Ornaments of the Temple were the Spoils, which their Kings had taken in War; the rich Preſents, which foreign Princes, upon certain Occaſions, had made; and the coſtly Gifts, which the Jews, from all Parts of the World, uſed to ſend to the Temple at Jeruſalem. Theſe were hung againſt the

Walls, and the Pillars of the Temple, for the People to behold; and, when Herod had rebuilt it, he not only replaced all the former Ornaments, but added ſeveral others, eſpecially the Spoils which he took in his War with the Arabians, and a Vine of maſſy Gold, of prodigious Weight and Value, which was his own free Gift.

The Prophecy of our Bleſſed Saviour, of the entire Ruin of the Temple, was, in great Meaſure, accompliſhed about forty Years after; when (as ſeveral Jewiſh Authors tell us) Taurus, i. e. Tirentius Rufus, whom Titus left Chief Commander of the Army in Judea, did with a Plough-ſhare tear up the Foundation of the Temple, and thereby ſignally fulfilled the Words of the Prophet, "Therefore ſhall Zion for your Sakes be plowed as a Field, and Jeruſalem ſhall become Heaps, and the Mountain of the Lord as high Places of the Foreſts," Micah iii. 12. It can hardly be thought, however, but that notwithſtanding this Demoliſhment, there might probably be left one Stone upon another, and therefore ſomething more was wanting towards the literal Completion of our Saviour's Prophecy, to which the Emperor Julian, in ſome Meaſure, contributed: For, having given the Jews Licence to rebuild their Temple at Jeruſalem, they took away every Stone of the old Foundation to help to build their new Edifice; but Heaven prevented their Deſign: For Flaſhes of Lightning (as our beſt Hiſtorians tell us) burſt out from the Foundation they had dug, and ſo blaſted and terrified them, that they were forced to give over their Enterprize, after they had pulled up, and removed all the Remains of the old Temple.

Never were there ſo many Impoſtors, or falſe Chriſt's as in the Time a little before the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, (Joſeph. Antiq. l. xx. c. 6.) doubtleſs, becauſe this was the Age, wherein the Jews, from the Prophecy of Daniel, were taught to expect their Meſſiah.

Beſides the War which the Jews waged with the Syrians, not long before the Deſtruction of their City (Joſ. Antiq. l. ii. c. 19.) the Conteſts between Otho and Vitellius, and Veſpaſian at at Rome were much about the ſame Time, and the Oppreſſion of the Governors of Judea, who minded nothing but to enrich themſelves, had ſo irritated the Minds of the People, that for ſome Time before their final Calamity, we read of nothing but Rebellions and Revolts, Parties and Factions, and Bands of Robbers haraſſing and infeſting the Country.

In the fourth Year of Claudius (as Euſebius informs us) there happened a great Famine, which oppreſſed all the Roman Empire, but more eſpecially Paleſtine, where many periſhed (according to Joſephus) for lack of Food. And the ſame Hiſtorian informs us, that when one Niger was ſlain by the Jews, he imprecated Famine and Peſtilence upon their Cities, which God accordingly inflicted.

In the Reigns of Claudius and Nero, there happened many Earthquakes in Aſia Minor and the Iſles of the Archipelago, where the Jews inhabited; (Euſeb.

(Euſeb. Chron. and Tacit. Annal. l. 2.) And Joſephus acquaints us that in the Night, when the Idumæans encamped before Jeruſalem, "there blew a dreadful Tempeſt of Wind and Rain, accompanied with ſuch terrible Flaſhes of Lightning, Claps of Thunder, and bellowing of Earthquakes, that put all People to their Wits End to think, what theſe Prodigies might portend."

In his Preface to the Hiſtory of the Wars of the Jews, Joſephus undertakes to record the Miſeries and Calamities, which befel that Nation, and the Signs and Prodigies, which preceded their Ruin. To this Purpoſe he tells us, that, for a whole Year together, a Comet, in the Figure of a Sword, hung over the City, and pointed as it were directly down upon it; and there were ſeen, in the Clouds, Armies in Battle-array, and Chariots, encompaſſing the Country, and inveſting their Cities; that, at the Feaſt of the Paſſover, in the Middle of the Night, a great Light ſhone upon the Temple and Altar, as if it had been Noonday: that, at the ſame Feaſt the great Gate of the Temple, made all of maſſy Braſs, and which twenty Men could hardly ſhut, opened of itſelf, tho' faſtened with Bolts and Bars; that at the Feaſt of Pentecoſt, ſoon after, when the Prieſts went into the Temple to officiate, they heard, at Frſt a Kind of confuſed Noiſe, and then a Voice calling out earneſtly, in articulate Words, "Let us be gone; let us be gone;" and that theſe Prodigies were really ſo, we have the Teſtimony of Tacitus, a Roman Hiſtorian of that Age.

That Part of our Saviour's Prediction concerning the Perſecution of Chriſtians, was literally fulfilled before the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem. As ſoon as Chriſtiany began to ſpread, the Jews wrote Letters to every Part of the World againſt the Profeſſors of it, in order to raiſe Perſecutions againſt them. St. Paul, before his Converſion, "breathing out Threatnings and Slaughter againſt the Diſciples of Chriſt," Acts ix. 1. "ſhut up many of them in Priſon, both Men and Women," Acts xxii. 4. xxvi. 10. ſo himſelf, when he was converted, and Silas, were not only impriſoned, but beaten in the Synagogue, Acts xvi. 23. as were likewiſe Peter and John, Acts v. 18. Stephen, the firſt Martyr, was ſlain by the Council, Acts vii. 59. James the Greater, by Herod, Acts xii. 1. and James the Leſs, by Ananus the High-prieſt: Multitudes of Chriſtians were perſecuted to Death by Saul, Acts xxii. 4. by the Jews, as Juſtin Martyr teſtifies; and by the Emperor Nero, as Tacitus relates, Annal. l. 15. for the Profeſſors of our moſt holy Religion, before the Principles of it came to be enquired into, were looked upon as the common Enemies of Mankind; inſomuch that whoſoever killed them, thought that he did God Service, John xvi. 2.

That before the Diſſolution of the Jewiſh State the Chriſtian Religion had ſpread itſelf over all the Parts of the then known World, we may reaſonably conclude from the Labours of St. Paul, who alone carried the Goſpel through Judea, Syria, Arabia, Greece, Macedonia, Achaia, Aſia Minor and Italy,

Italy, &c. And if the other Apoſtles whoſe Travels we are not ſo well acquainted with did the like, there is no doubt to be made, but that their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World, Rom. x. 18. St. Peter addreſſes his firſt Epiſtle to the Elect, that were in Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia, and Bithynia; and Clemens, who was his Cotemporary, and immediate Succeſſor to the See of Rome, in his Epiſtle to the Corinthians, tells us, "that the Nations beyond the Ocean were governed by the Precepts of the Lord." An Event this! which he only could foretel, who having all Power in Heaven and Earth, was able to effect it.

"Immediately after the Tribulation of thoſe Days, ſhall the Sun be darkened, and the Moon ſhall not give her Light, and the Stars ſhall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens ſhall be ſhaken," Matth. xxiv. 29. that theſe Words are not to be taken in a literal Senſe, is plain, becauſe that after the Sacking of Jeruſalem by Veſpaſian's Army no ſuch Thing as is here mentioned happened to the Sun, Moon, or Stars. Theſe Expreſſions therefore muſt be metaphorical, and do here denote, as they frequently do in the Writings of the Prophets, and other Authors, the intire Deſtruction and utter Deſolation, which is brought upon any Nation. For in this Language the Prophet Iſaiah ſpeaks of the Deſtruction of Babylon: "The Day of the Lord cometh, cruel, both with Wrath and fierce Anger to lay the Land deſolate, and he ſhall deſtroy the Sinners thereof out of it: For the Stars of Heaven, and the Conſtellations thereof ſhall not give their Light; the Sun ſhall be darkened in his going forth, and the Moon ſhall not cauſe her Light to ſhine," ch. xiii. 9. which, according to Maimonides, are proverbial Expreſſions, importing the Deſtruction, and utter Ruin of a Nation, and of ſuch Perſons more eſpecially, who, for their State and Dignity, might be compared to the Sun, Moon, and Stars. Accordingly, the Senſe of our Saviour's Words muſt be,—That, after the taking and deſtroying of Jeruſalem, God's Judgments would ſtill purſue the People, ſo that thoſe who ſurvived the Ruin of their Country, ſhould be diſperſed into different Regions, ſold for Slaves, or reduced to a Condition worſe than Slavery. And ſo the Event proved: For thoſe that were carried to Rome, ſerved only to adorn the Triumph of their Conqueror: Thoſe that fled to Antioch for Shelter, were cruelly maſſacreed there: Thoſe, that maintained the Caſtle of Maſſada, rather than fall into the Hands of the Enemy, agreed to ſlay one another: Thoſe that eſcaped to Thebes and Alexandria, were brought back, and tortured to Death; and thoſe of Cyrene, who joined a falſe Prophet, named Jonathan, were all cut to Pieces by the Roman General. All this happened immediately after the taking of Jeruſalem; and without any farther Search into their Hiſtory, is enough to verify our Saviour's Expreſſion, that "the Sun was darkened, and the Moon gave no Light upon that wretched People."

The

The Deſolation which the Jews ſuffered in this laſt War with the Romans, was ſo vaſtly great that all Hiſtory can ſcarce furniſh us with an Example of the like Nature. The Number of the Slain was Eleven hundred thouſand; the Number of their Priſoners was Ninety-ſeven thouſand. Thoſe that were above ſeventeen, were ſent into Egypt to work in the Mines; thoſe that were under that Age, were ſold for Slaves into different Countries; and a great Number of others were diſtributed in the Roman Provinces, to be expoſed to wild Beaſts on the Theatre; and as Gladiators, to kill one another, for the Sport and Diverſion of the Spectators: Until the Cities were waſted without Inhabitant, and the Houſes without a Man, and the Land was utterly deſolate, and the Lord had removed Men far away, and there was a great Forſaking in the midſt of the Land, as the Prophet expreſſes it, Iſaiah vi. 11, 12.

The Chriſtians took the Advice of our Saviour: For when Ceſtius Gallus had beſieged Jeruſalem, and, without any viſible Cauſe, on a ſudden, raiſed the Siege, the Chriſtians that were in the City took this Opportunity to make their Eſcape to Pella in Paræa, a mountainous Country, and to other Places under the Government of King Agrippa, where they found Safety. Thus punctually were the Predictions of our Saviour fulfilled; ſo that "whoſoever ſhall compare them (as Euſebius, in his Eccl. Hiſt. l. iii. c. 7. expreſſes it) with the Account of Joſephus, concerning the War of the Jews, cannot but admire the Wiſdom of Chriſt, and own his Predictions to be divine."

The Puniſhment inflicted on the evil Servant is ſaid to be cutting aſunder, Matth. xxiv. 51. In the ſame Manner as Samuel uſed Agag, 1 Sam. xv. 33. and David the Ammonites, 2 Sam. xii. 31. and Nabuchodonoſor threatened the Blaſphemers of the true God, Dan. iii. 29. This Puniſhment was, in old Times, inflicted on thoſe that were falſe to their Creditors, Rebels to their Prince, or Betrayers of their Country; nor was it in Uſe only among the Eaſtern People, but among the Romans, as we learn from Suetonius in the Life of Caius, and among the Greeks, as Homer, Sophocles and Ariſtophanes inform us: And therefore this Puniſhment, ſays our Saviour, will I inflict on thoſe, that are perfidious to their Covenant in Baptiſm, and Enemies to my Government.

The better to underſtand the Parable of the wiſe and fooliſh Virgins, we ſhould do well to obſerve what the Cuſtom at Marriages was, to which our Saviour ſeems to allude. When the Bridegroom was to bring home the Bride (which was generally the concluſive Ceremony, and done in the Night-time) the young Women of the Town, to which ſhe was to come, in order to do her Honour, went to meet her with lighted Lamps: She too, according to her Quality and Condition, had her Companions and Servants attending her, and ſome of the moſt beautiful Ladies of the Place, from whence ſhe came, going before her. And moſt of our modern Travellers inform

form us, that among the Eaſtern People (eſpecially the Perſians) this Way of conducting the Brides home, with Lamps and with lighted Torches, ſtill prevails. None need be told, that by the Bride-groom we are to underſtand our Saviour Chriſt; by the Bride, his Church; by the Virgins, Chriſtians in general; and by the Oil in their Lamps, the neceſſary Qualifications of Faith and good Works.

For an Explication of the Parable of the Talents entruſted with diligent and ſlothful Servants we may obſerve, that the Man travelling into a far Country, is our Saviour Chriſt, who, by aſcending into Heaven, has deprived the Church of his corporal Preſence; that his Servants, are Chriſtians in general, or more particularly, Apoſtles, and firſt Miniſters, who ſucceeded him in the Propagation of the Goſpel; and the Talents committed to their Management, are the ſupernatural Gifts which he beſtowed upon them, and all the Endowments both of Body and Mind, all the Helps and Means, and Opportunities which he gives us, in order to ſerve him, and to work out our Salvation.

The Reaſon of our Lord's mingling the Signs of the particular Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and of the general Diſſolution of the world together, was to engage us, at the Approach of particular Judgments upon Cities and Nations, to be always mindful and prepared for the general Judgment of the laſt Day.

That the Throne of Glory, upon which Chriſt ſhall ſit at the laſt Day, will be nothing elſe but a bright and refulgent Cloud, we have Reaſon to believe, from the Teſtimony of the Angels that attended at our Lord's Aſcenſion. For while the Apoſtles, then preſent, were "looking ſtedfaſtly towards Heaven, as he went up, behold two Men ſtood by them, in white Apparel, who alſo ſaid, ye Men of Galilee, why ſtand ye gazing up to Heaven? this ſame Jeſus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, ſhall ſo come in like Manner as ye have ſeen him go into Heaven, Acts i. 9. 10." which compared with our Lord's own Declarations concerning his ſecond Coming, Mark xiii, 26. with what St. Paul foretels, 1 Theſ. iv. 17. and St. John foreſaw, Revel. xiv. 14. are abundantly ſufficient to juſtify the generally received Opinion, that, as our bleſſed Saviour went up into Heaven, ſo he ſhall return thence to Judgment, upon a true and material Cloud.

The Manner in which our Saviour expreſſes himſelf, upon this Occaſion, ſeems to imply, that the general Judgment is to be held in ſome particular Place; and from a Paſſage in the Prophet Joel, ſeveral modern, as well as ancient Doctors, are of Opinion, that the Valley of Jehoſhaphat is appointed to be the Place: "For I will gather all Nations, ſays God, and will bring them down into the Valley of Jehoſhaphat, and I will plead with them there for my People, and for my Heritage Iſrael," chap. iii. 2. but as the Word Jehoſhaphat, in that Text, ſignifies the Judgment of God, the Valley of Jehoſhaphat denotes any Place, in gene-

ral,

ral, where God exerciſes his Judgments. The Truth is, if all Nations of the World muſt appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt; and, that they may receive the Things done in the Body, are to be cloathed with their Reſurrection Bodies, there muſt neceſſarily be required a large Space to contain them; and therefore St. Paul ſeems to point out the grand Expanſum of the Air, as the moſt convenient for that Purpoſe.

Return we now to our Hiſtory. As ſoon as our Lord had finiſhed this prophetick Diſcourſe, he went, in the Evening, to Bethany, and there ſupped at the Houſe of one Simon, whom he had formerly cured of a Leproſy. At Supper, Mary, to teſtify her Love and Reſpect, came, and out of an Alabaſter Cruſe, poured a large Quantity of ſuch rich Ointment upon his Head, as filled the whole Houſe with its fragrant Smell. This ſeeming Prodigality raiſed the Indignation of the reſt of the Apoſtles, as well as Judas; and as they made the ſame Objection, ſo our Saviour's Defence of Mary turns upon the ſame Topicks; only he adds, "that, as ſhe had done a great and generous Action, whereſoever his Goſpel ſhould be preached thro' the whole World, there ſhould her munificent regard to him be likewiſe publiſhed, to her everlaſting Honour and Renown."

When Supper was ended, our Lord repaired to his uſual Lodgings, at Martha's Houſe; and on the Day following (in all Probability) continued at Bethany, without going to Jeruſalem, as he had done the Day before. In the mean Time the Sanhedrim aſſembled at the Palace of Caiaphas, the High-prieſt, where the Prieſts, Scribes and Elders of the People, had a ſolemn Debate and Conſultation, how they might take Jeſus by ſome ſecret Stratagem, and put him to death. This was the ſecond Council that they had held upon this Occaſion; and though therein it was determined that he ſhould die, yet they thought it not ſo adviſeable to put the Thing in Execution in the Time of this Solemnity, leſt it ſhould cauſe a Sedition among the People, who had the higheſt Veneration for him.

When Evening was come, he, with his Apoſtles, ſupped (very probably) at Martha's Houſe; and while they were at Table, conſidering that his Time was now ſhort, he was minded to give them a Teſtimony of his Love; and from his own Example, teach them two Virtues, which, of all others, were more eſpecially requiſite in their Miniſtry of the Goſpel, Humility and Charity. To this purpoſe, riſing from the Table, laying aſide his upper Garment, and girding himſelf with a Towel (as the Manner of Servants then was, when they waited on their Maſters) he poured Water into a Baſon, and began to waſh his Apoſtles Feet, and wipe them with a Towel. Amazed at the Condeſcenſion, St. Peter (when he came to him) refuſed at firſt, to admit of ſuch a ſervile Office from his heavenly Maſter; but when he urged the Neceſſity, and, in ſome Meaſure, intimated to him the ſymbolical Intent of it, he permitted him to do what he thought fit.

When our Lord had made an End of waſhing his Apoſtles Feet, he put on his Garment, and ſat down at Table again, and began to tell them the Meaning of what he had done, viz. "That ſince he who was ſo juſtly acknowledged to be their Lord and Maſter, had ſo far debaſed himſelf, as to waſh their Feet; they, in Imitation of his Example, ought to think it no Diſparagement to them, to perform the meaneſt Offices of Kindneſs and Charity to one another: For tho' they were exalted to the Dignity of his Apoſtles, yet ſtill they were but his Servants, and therefore it would be an high Piece of Arrogance in them, to aſſume more State and Grandeur, than their Maſter had done before them.

Soon after this, reflecting with himſelf, how well he had loved, and upon all Occaſions, how kindly he had treated theſe his Diſciples, he was not a little concerned, that any of them ſhould prove ſo baſe and ungrateful as to betray him; and when he had declared the Thing, and Peter, deſirous to know the Perſon, beckoned to John, who was neareſt his Maſter, to aſk him the Queſtion; he ſignified to him, that it was Judas Iſcariot, to whom he gave a Sop (as he told John he would) and when he had ſo done, bade him go about what he was about with all Expedition; which the reſt of the Apoſtles, being ignorant of the Signal which our Lord had given John, ſuppoſed to be an Order to Judas (as he was the Purſe-bearer) either to give ſomething to the Poor, or to provide what was neceſſary for the Feaſt.

As ſoon as Supper was ended, Judas being now confirmed in his wicked Reſolution, left Bethany in haſte; and underſtanding that the Sanhedrim was met at the High Prieſt's Houſe, thither he repaired; and, upon giving him a ſufficient Reward, offered to betray his Maſter, and (in the Manner they deſired) to deliver him privately into their Hand. This Propoſition was highly pleaſing to the Council; who immediately bargained with him for thirty Pieces of Silver: And when Judas had received the Money, from that Moment he ſought an Opportunity to betray his Maſter, in the Abſence of the Multitude.

While Judas was thus bartering for his Maſter's Blood, his Maſter was preparing the Reſt of his Diſciples for his Departure, and endeavouring to comfort them with this Conſideration, that his Death would be a Means to diſplay both his own, and his Father's Glory, as it was a Preliminary to his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion into Heaven. As therefore it was decreed that he muſt leave them, the ſtronger ſhould their Union be with one another; and therefore he recommended, very earneſtly to them, the Duty of mutual Love; a Duty which had been hitherto ſo much neglected, that his enjoyning it might well be accounted a new Commandment, and what was to be the common Badge and Character of his true Diſciples for ever after.

When the Day before the Feaſt of the Paſſover was come, our Lord ſent to Peter and John to Jeruſalem, to prepare all Things according to the Law;

Law; and leſt they ſhould want a convenient Room for the Celebration of the Paſchal Supper, he had prepared the Heart of a certain Hoſt in the City, to accommodate them with one. And therefore, having provided a Lamb, ſlain it in the Temple, ſprinkled its Blood on the Altar, and done every Thing elſe that was required of them, they returned to their Maſter at Bethany: For he perceiving that his Diſcourſe, about leaving the World and them, had blaſted all their Hopes of ſecular Greatneſs, and left them melancholy and diſconſolate, ſtayed a good Part of the Day with them at Bethany, to raiſe their drooping Spirits, with the Aſſurances of an happy Immortality; which (as he told them) he was to prepare for them in Heaven, and wanted not Power to do it, becauſe he and his Father (as to their Divinity) were perfectly the ſame; and with the Promiſe of ſending them the Holy Spirit from above, which he took Care to repreſent, as a Comforter, to ſupport them in Afflictions; as a Teacher to inſtruct them in all neceſſary Truths; and as an Advocate to plead and defend their Cauſe againſt their Enemies. So that they had no Reaſon to be dejected, becauſe in this Senſe he would be always with them; becauſe, whatever they aſked in his Name, his Father would give them; and becauſe, when he was gone, they ſhould be enabled to do Miracles, greater than what they had ſeen him do; and therefore, "Peace I leave with you," ſays he, taking his Farewel, my Peace I give unto you: Not as the World giveth, give I unto you; let not your Hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Here we may add ſome explanatory Remarks on the foregoing Paſſages.

According to the Tradition of the Church, the Conſultation, which the Sanhedrim held, and the Agreement which Judas made with them to betray our Lord were on Wedneſday; and therefore they gave it as a Reaſon, why they faſted on Wedneſdays and Fridays, becauſe on the one Chriſt was betrayed, and ſuffered on the other.

Caiaphas, the High-Prieſt, is called, by the Jewiſh Hiſtorian, Joſeph. The High-prieſthood he purchaſed of Valerius Gracchus; and after he had ten Years enjoyed that Dignity, was depoſed by Vitellius, Governor of Syria, and ſucceeded by Jonathan, the Son of Ananus or Annas.

The Pieces of Silver which Judas received to betray his Maſter were Staters, or Shekels of the Sanctuary; Thirty of which amounted to Three Pounds and Fifteen Shillings of our Money; the uſual Price that was given for a Man or Maid Servant, Exod. xxi. 32. It is hardly ſuppoſeable that any of theſe Pieces are at this Time extant, though both at Rome and Paris there are Pieces ſhewn, which are pretended to be the very ſame that were Part of the Price of the Purchaſe of our Saviour's Blood; but Perſons well ſkilled in that Art, aſſure us, that theſe Pieces are only the antient Medals of Rhodes; on the one Side ſtamped with a Coloſs,

which repreſents the Sun, and on the other a Roſe, which was the City Arms, as we call it.

The Diſciples of the Baptiſt were known by the Auſterity of their Lives, and the Diſciples of the Phariſees by their Habit and Separation from other Men, but our Bleſſed Saviour was willing to have his Diſciples known by their mutual Love and Affection to each other; which in the primitive Ages, was ſo great, that theſe great Heathens, with Admiration cry out, "See how they love one another!" and even hate and envy them for their mutual Affection.

With reſpect to the Feaſt of the Paſſover, to which our Saviour was about to repair, St. Matthew ſays, ch. xxvi. 17. "It was the firſt Day of the Feaſt;" but it is no uncommon Thing to put the Word firſt for that which properly went before. Thus in the Old Teſtament it is ſaid. "that the Hands of the Witneſſes ſhall be firſt upon him, that is condemned to die, "to put him to Death, and afterwards the Hands of all the People, Deut. xvii. 7. but if the Hands of the Witneſſes ſhould firſt diſpatch him, there would be no Occaſion for the Hands of the People. In the firſt Book of Maccabees, it is twice ſaid of Alexander the Great, that he reigned firſt over Greece, ch. i. 1. and vi. 2. but every one knows, that before him there were ſeveral Kings in Macedonia; and therefore the Meaning of the Words muſt be, that he reigned in Macedonia before he reigned in Aſia: And, to the ſame Purpoſe, in the New Teſtament, we find St. Paul ſtiling our Bleſſed Lord, "the Firſt-born of every Creature, Col. i. 15." i. e. begotten of the Father before the Production of any Creature; and telling us, that the Huſbandman that laboureth muſt firſt partake of the Fruits, i. e. he muſt labour before he can reap the Fruits of his Travel, and in like Acceptation of the Word, the firſt Day of the Feaſt, may be interpreted the Day before the Feaſt, as might be proved likewiſe by Heathen Authors.

It is to be obſerved, that the Houſes in Jeruſalem, at the Time of this Feaſt, were of common Right to any that would eat the Paſſover in them; and yet it is not unlikely, that our Lord might be well known to the Maſter of the Houſe; who, very probably took it as an high Honour, that he had made Choice of his, rather than any other, to eat the Paſchal Supper in.

The Greek Word in this Place tranſlated Comforter, whom our Lord promiſed to ſend them after his Departure, ſignifies both an Advocate and Comforter; and the Holy Spirit, when he deſcended upon the Apoſtles did the Part of an Advocate, by confirming their Teſtimony by Signs and Miracles, and various Gifts imparted to them, and by pleading their Cauſe before Kings and rulers, and againſt all their Adverſaries; and he did the Part of Comforter, as he was ſent for the Conſolation of the Apoſtles, and all ſucceeding Chriſtians, in all their Troubles,

Troubles, filling their Hearts with Joy and Gladneſs, and giving them an inward Teſtimony of God's Love to them, together with an Aſſurance of their future Happineſs.

What Interpreters ſay of Diſeaſes healed by the Shadow of Peter, and by a Napkin ſent from St. Paul, and of Miracles performed throughout the World, and, for the Space of three whole Centuries, Devils ejected every where, is not unfitly mentioned here, as anſwering to our Saviour's Words; and yet, we cannot but think, that this ſhould chiefly be referred to the wonderful Succeſs of the Goſpel preached by the Apoſtles, after the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them; to the Gift of Tongues, and the Interpretation of them; of Prophecy, and diſcerning of Spirits; and the imparting theſe Gifts to others, by Baptiſm, and the Impoſition of the Apoſtles Hands. For, as this was a greater Work in our Bleſſed Saviour to aſſiſt ſo many with his mighty Power, when abſent at ſo great a Diſtance, as the Earth is from Heaven, than to do Miracles in their Preſence; ſo to communicate theſe Gifts to Men, and to enable them to transfer them to others, is the evident Effect of a ſupernatural and omnipotent Cauſe, and eſpecially, when our Lord ſucceeded ſo little in his three Years Preaching here on Earth, and had ſo few ſincere Diſciples, that he ſhould enable his Apoſtles, at one Sermon, to convert ſome thouſands, and cauſe his Goſpel to fly like Lightning through the World, and beat down all the ſtrong Holds of Oppoſition: this is truly wonderful.

Proceed we now in our Narrative.

As ſoon as he had ended this Diſcourſe, he aroſe, and with his Diſciples, going towards Jeruſalem, arrived at the Place where they were to eat the Paſchal Lamb. In the Evening, when it grew dark, they ſat down to the Table in a leaning Poſture; and as he began to renew the Diſcourſe, "that one in the Company ſhould certainly betray him, but that better it had been for the Man who did ſo, if he had never been born," the Concern and Sadneſs was ſo general, that every one began to enquire for himſelf, whether he was the Man? untill it came to Judas's Turn, who, having the Confidence to aſk the Queſtion, received a poſitive Anſwer, "That he was:" Whereupon he ſoon withdrew from his Maſter and adjoined himſelf to his Enemies, who were impatiently expecting the Performance of his Promiſe.

When the Paſchal Supper was ended, our Saviour proceeded to the Inſtitution of another, in Commemoration of his own Death and Paſſion. For he took Bread, and when he had bleſſed it, and broke it, he diſtributed it to his Apoſtles, calling it his Body; and, after he had ſo done, he took the Cup of Wine, and having, in like Manner bleſſed it, he gave it among them, calling it his Blood of the new Covenant, and commanding them to do the ſame, i. e. to eat Bread and drink Wine in this ſacramental Manner, even unto

unto the End of the World, in Remembrance of him.

After this Inſtitution of that Form of the Memorial, which his Apoſtles, and their Poſterity were to continue, he gave them to underſtand, that this was the laſt Paſchal Supper, which he ſhould eat, and the laſt Wine that he ſhould drink with them, until he drank it new in the Kingdom of God: From which Words ſome of his Apoſtles inferring, that tho' his Kingdom was not to be then, yet it would not fail to commence immediately after his Reſurrection, they fell into unreaſonable Contentions about Priority, or who ſhould have the Office of the higheſt Truſt and Honour about their Maſter, which our Lord endeavoured to repreſs, by the ſame Arguments that he had employed upon the like Occaſion: And then turning to Peter, he apprized him of the imminent Danger, which he and his Brethren were in, and what a ſevere Trial the great Enemy of Mankind would very ſpeedily bring upon them, to whom Peter, in Confidence of his own Courage and Reſolution, anſwered for himſelf, that he was ready to go with him to Priſon, and to Death; but our Saviour, who beſt knew his Weakneſs, gave him to underſtand, that before the Crowing of the Cock he ſhould deny him thrice.

After this, our Lord, in his final Exhortation to his Apoſtles, reminded them of the Choice which he had made of them, and the kind Treatment which he had all along ſhewn them; and that therefore it was their Duty, and their Intereſt both, to adhere to him, as the Branch did to the Vine, in order to bring forth the Fruits of Righteouſneſs, and to continue immoveable in the Profeſſion of his Religion, notwithſtanding all the Perſecutions they ſhould meet with, which, indeed, would prove ſo violent and outrageous, that Men would think they did God Service in killing them. This, however, ſhould not utterly deject them, becauſe his Abſence from them would not be long. His Death was but to uſher in his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion; and the Benefit, which would accrue to them from theſe, viz. in the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, to be their Guide and Comforter, in his own Interceſſion for them at God's Right-Hand, and in their Prayers and Supplications, which (if offered up in his Name) would not fail of Admittance to the Throne of Grace, would abundantly compenſate the Want of his Preſence: And "therefore I have told you theſe Things, ſays he, that in me ye might have Peace: In the World ye ſhall have Tribulation, but be of good Cheer, I have overcome the World."

Theſe comfortable Exhortations to his Apoſtles, were attended with a ſolemn Prayer and Interceſſion to Almighty God; for himſelf, that as he had executed the Commiſſion, for which he came into the World, he might be reinſtated in the ſame Glory, which he had with his Father from Eternity; for his Apoſtles, that they might

might live in brotherly Love and Unity, be preſerved in all Dangers, and ſanctified in their Minds and Converſations; and for all ſucceeding Chriſtians, that they might continue in the Communion of the Saints here, and be admitted to the Sight and Participation of his Glory and Felicity hereafter: And, having concluded with an Hymn, which he and his Apoſtles ſung together, he left the City, and paſſing over the Brook Cedron, came to a Place called Gethſemane, where was a Garden well known to Judas, becauſe thither our Lord and his Apoſtles uſed frequently to repair, both for Retirement and Devotion.

As they were going to this Place, our Lord, with mighty Concern, began to tell them, that, that very Night the Prophecy of Zachariah, concerning the Shepherd's being ſmitten, and the whole Flock diſperſed, would be fulfilled in his and their Perſons, foraſmuch as every one of them upon the Diſtreſs that was going to befal him, would flee away from him, and forſake him. This Peter thought a Diſparagement to his Courage, and therefore aſſured our Lord, that, though all Mankind ſhould forſake him, yet would not he; and being told again, that he would certainly deny him before the Time of Cock-crowing, with the utmoſt Vehemence he affirmed, that tho' he ſhould die, he would not deny him; and the like Profeſſion of undaunted Adherence made all the reſt.

When they were come to the Garden, our Lord ordered the reſt of his Apoſtles to tarry for him, at a certain Place, whilſt himſelf, with the three that were moſt intimate with him, Peter, James and John, retired a while to his private Devotions; as they were going along, he required them to join their Prayers with his, that they might not be delivered over to Temptation. But they were not gone above the Diſtance of a Stone's Caſt, before he found his Spirits depreſſed, and his Soul ſadly ſorrowful, even unto Death; which, when he had diſcovered to the three Apoſtles, and deſired them to watch with him a little, in this trying and momentous Juncture, he withdrew from them; and then throwing himſelf proſtrate on the Ground, begged of God, "That, if it was poſſible" (as all Things were poſſible to him) "he might be excuſed from drinking the bitter Potion, whoſe black Ingredients filled him with Horror and Amazement; nevertheleſs in this he ſubmitted himſelf intirely to his divine Pleaſure: And, having prayed to this Effect, he returned to his Apoſtles, but finding them aſleep, he awaked them, and, in a Reproof full of Love, reminded Peter more eſpecially, of his late Promiſes and preſent Neglect of him, when he moſt of all ſtood in Need of his Comfort and Aſſiſtance. He adviſed him, therefore, to keep himſelf awake, for fear of the Temptations that were buſy about him, and added this compaſſionate Obſervation; that tho' the Spirit was willing, and ready enough to make good Reſolutions, yet the Fleſh was weak, and unable, very often to put them in Execution.

Thrice

Thrice did our Bleſſed Lord retire and pray in this Manner; but in the laſt Time his Senſe of God's Indignation againſt the Sins of Mankind, and the diſmal Proſpect of what he was to ſuffer in the Expiation of them, made his Prayer more vehement, and his Agonies ſo violent, that the Sweat, which fell from his Body, was like large Drops of Blood; and human Nature muſt have been exhauſted under it had not an Angel from Heaven been immediately ſent to ſtrengthen and ſupport him. With this Recruit he returned the third Time to his Apoſtles; but finding them ſtill in the ſame ſleepy Condition, he told them, that now they might ſleep on as long as they pleaſed, becauſe he had no farther Occaſion for their Aſſiſtance; that however, it would not be improper for them to ariſe, becauſe the Traitor, who was to deliver him up to the Gentiles, was juſt at Hand. Nor were the Words well out of his Mouth, before Judas, accompanied with a Band of Soldiers and Officers, together with ſome of the chief Prieſts, Phariſees and Elders of the People, all armed with Swords and Staves, came to apprehend him.

To prevent all Miſtakes, the Traitor had given them a Sign, that the Perſon whom he ſhould kiſs, was the Man they were to apprehend; and therefore approaching our Lord, with an Addreſs of ſeeming Civility, he ſaluted him, and in return received a Reproof of his Perfidy, but in ſuch gentle and eaſy Terms, as ſpoke a Mind perfectly calm and undiſturbed; and then ſtepping forward, with an Air of Majeſty, our Lord demanded of the Soldiers, whom they wanted? They told him Jeſus of Nazareth. He replied, that he was the Perſon: But when they were going to lay rude Hands upon him, the impetuous Rays of Glory, which darted from his divine Face, ſtruck ſo fiercely upon their Eyes, that they fell to the Ground. However, inſtead of taking the Advantage of their Conſternation, to make his Eſcape (as he had done at other Times) he again demanded of them, who it was they wanted? And when they again made him the ſame Anſwer, he told them, That if he was the Perſon, he expected that his Diſciples ſhould depart unmoleſted.

When the Multitude began to lay Hands on Jeſus, ſome of his Apoſtles, having Swords with them, aſked their Maſter, if they might draw in his Defence: But, before they had his Anſwer, Peter had drawn his Sword, and, in great Fury ſtruck at Malchus, one of the High-prieſt's Servants, with a Deſign to cleave his Head, tho' he happened only to cut off his right Ear. Our Saviour, however, rebuking his intemperate Zeal, commanded him to put up his Sword, becauſe he had no Occaſion for human Aid, who had Legions of Angels at his Command; and then, having cured the Man's Ear with a Touch, he turned about, and expoſtulated with the Soldiery, the Indignity of apprehending him in ſo ſcandalous a Manner, as if he were a Thief, or ſome vile Malefactor, when they had daily an Opportunity of taking him in the Temple. But, ſay what he would,

would, it availed nothing. They immediately bound him, and led him away.

The Apoſtles now, ſeeing their Maſter thus treated, loſt all their Courage, and (as he had foretold them) left him, and took themſelves to Flight. For ſuch was the Violence of the Soldiers, that, ſeeing a young Man following the Company, with nothing but a Night-gown on, and ſuppoſing him to be one of our Lord's Diſciples, they laid hold of him; but he, by quitting his Garment, ſlipped out of their Hands, and fled away naked.

Being come to this Period of our Hiſtory, ſome Remarks thereon may be thought proper.

At the firſt Inſtitution of the Paſchal Supper, the Iſraelites were commanded to eat it in a ſtanding Poſture, and in haſte; but here we find our Saviour and his Apoſtles eating it lying down, or inclining on their left Side, as it was then the Manner of the Jews. When, or upon what Account, this Alteration came to be made, we have no other Information, than what we find in the Writings of their Rabbins, viz. that they uſed this leaning Poſture, as Freemen do, in Memory of their Freedom; and therefore, though at their ordinary Meals, they commonly ſat at Table, as we do; yet, whenever they were minded to regale themſelves, they uſed this Poſture of Diſcumbency, and eſpecially at the Paſchal Supper, no other was allowed. Thus lying on Beds or Couches, made for that Purpoſe, with a Table before them, whereon they leaned, they ſtretched out their Feet behind them, thereby to remove the leaſt Shew of ſtanding to attend, or to go upon any one's Employment, which might carry in it any Colour of Servitude, or Contrariety to their Freedom. And from this Poſture of ſitting, or leaning upon a Table with their Elbow, one after another, we rightly underſtand thoſe Texts, which ſpeak of the beloved Apoſtle's leaning on the Boſom, or on the Breaſt of Jeſus, as the learned Lightfoot, in his Diſcourſe of the Temple-Service, has amply ſhewn.

It is a great Queſtion among the Antients, whether Judas was preſent at our Lord's Inſtitution of the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, or abſented himſelf before. St. Luke's Words, which are ſubſequent to the Inſtitution, "Behold the Hand of him that betrayed me, is with me on the Table, ch. xxii. 21. ſeem to imply that he was preſent, and partook of the Euchariſt; but many Commentators are of a contrary Opinion, viz. that after our Saviour had declared him to be the Man, who would betray him (which was between the Paſchal and Euchariſtical Supper) he immediately left the Company, and went away; and that conſequently there is a Miſlocation in St. Luke's Words.

The Reaſon which our Saviour gives for our Participation of the Cup, viz. "Becauſe it is the Blood of the New Teſtament, which is ſhed for the Remiſſion of Sins," concerned the Laity, as well as the Prieſts, becauſe his Blood was equally ſhed for both; and therefore the Command, Drink ye all

of this, to which the Reaſon is annexed, concerns them likewiſe. But there is another Reaſon, why our Lord ſaid to his Apoſtles, "Eat this Bread, and drink this Cup," viz. that, by ſo doing, they might remember his Death, his Body broken, and his Blood equally ſhed for them, ſays St Luke, "and ſhew it forth till his ſecond Coming," 1 Cor. xi. 26. Now this as St. Paul demonſtrates, concerns all Believers, as well as Prieſts, and therefore the drinking of the Cup (by which the Commemoration is made) as well as eating of the Bread, muſt equally concern them.

Some are of Opinion, that by the Kingdom of God here (as in ſeveral other Places) we are not to underſtand Heaven, or the Happineſs we are there to enjoy, but rather the Goſpel State, and the Kingdom of Chriſt, which began at his Reſurrection, and was more fully eſtabliſhed when he ſat down at the right Hand of Power, and was made Heir of all Things; and conſequently, that our Lord's drinking of Wine, may then relate to this "eating and drinking with his Diſciples, after he aroſe from the Dead," Acts x. 41. but, becauſe the Felicities of Heaven are frequently repreſented under the Metaphors of eating and drinking, Matt. viii. 11. Luke ii. 30. Others make the Senſe of our Saviour's Words to be this, "I will not henceforth drink of the Fruit of the Vine, but both you and I, and my Father's Glory, ſhall be ſatisfied with Rivers of Pleaſure, far ſweeter, and more excellent than the richeſt Wines can be." There is, however, a third Way of interpreting this Paſſage, which, by comparing it with the Words of St. Luke, ſeems by much the more probable; and that is, by making the Fruits of the Vine ſignify, in a peculiar Manner, the Cup of the Paſſover, or the Cup of Charity in the Poſtcœnium of the Paſſover, wherein the Sacraments of Chriſt's Body and Blood were founded. For, that Chriſt was now to die, and neither before nor after his Reſurrection, to eat any more Paſſovers with his Apoſtles, nor any more to drink the Cup of Charity, now deſigned to a Chriſtian Uſe, is ſufficiently evident. It is obſervable, therefore in St. Luke, ch. xxii. 16. that the Words are directly applied to the Paſſover; I have deſired to eat this Paſſover, for I will no more eat of it;" and by repeating the Cup, ver. 18. the Evangeliſt muſt mean the Cup of the Paſſover, or the ſacramental Cup of Charity, which ſucceeded it; and conſequently our Saviour's Meaning muſt be, That he would no more uſe theſe typical Adumbrations, being himſelf now ready to perform what was ſignified and expreſſed by them, i. e. to paſs ſuddenly from Earth to Heaven, through a red Sea of Blood, and there to compleat the Myſtery of the Sacrament, by uniting his Diſciples one to another, and making them all Partakers of his heavenly Riches.

It is commonly remarked by profane Authors, that the Cock uſually crows twice in a Night; once about Midnight, and the ſecond Time at the fourth Watch of the Night, or much about Break of Day; that this latter,

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as being the louder and moſt obſervable, is that which is properly called Cock-crowing; and that of this Crowing of the Cock the Evangeliſts are to be underſtood, when they relate Chriſt's Words thus, " before the Cock crow (i. e. before that Time of Night, which is emphatically ſo called) thou ſhalt deny me thrice," appears from St. Mark's Saying, that the Cock crowed after his firſt Denial of Chriſt, and crowed the ſecond Time, after his third Denial.

Though to be of good Cheer under Tribulation, does by no Means infer that Firmneſs of Mind (as ſome Philoſophers of old miſcalled it) which preſerves a Man from being at all afflicted with Calamities, or moved from his uſual Eaſineſs of Temper; yet thus much it certainly means, That neither the Sharpneſs of any Afflictions we feel, nor the Terror of any we fear, ſhould ſo far vanquiſh our Reaſon and Religion, as to drive us upon unlawful Methods of declining the one, or delivering ourſelves from the other. We are to ſatisfy ourſelves in the Juſtice, the Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of him, who orders all the Events that befal us; to entertain them with all Meekneſs and much Patience; to bring our Wills into Subjection to the divine Will; to rejoice in the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and preſerve it at any Rate, tho' with the Hazard, nay, certain Loſs of all our worldly Advantages; and to ſet the Supports and Rewards of perſecuted Truth and afflicted Piety, in Oppoſition to all the Diſcouragements from Abroad, and all the Frailties of feeble and too-yielding Fleſh and Blood at Home.

By the World, in this Paſſage, (I have overcome the World) we are no doubt, to underſtand the Evil of the World, the Wickedneſs, the Malice, the Temptations, the Troubles, all that we have Reaſon to fear, or flee from, either in this or the next Life. Now the Wickedneſs of the World Chriſt has overcome, by expiating the Sins of Mankind in the Sacrifice of himſelf upon the Croſs; and by the powerful Aſſiſtance of his Grace, enabling all the Faithful to conquer the Paſſions of corrupt Nature. The Malice of it he overcame, by diſappointing the Deſigns of the Devil, and his wicked Inſtruments againſt himſelf, and his Goſpel, making his own Sufferings fatal to the Contrivers, and ſaving to all penitent Believers. The Temptations of it he overcame, by that ſevere, but ſtill ſocial Virtue, and heavenly Piety, which ſhone ſo bright in all his Converſation; and the Troubles of it by ſubmitting to Hunger and Thirſt, to Poverty and Grief. Even Death itſelf, our laſt and moſt dreaded Enemy, he has overcome, taken from " this ſtrong Man the Armour wherein he truſted, and divided his Spoils."

The Hymn ſung by our Lord and his Diſciples at his laſt Supper, by moſt Interpreters is thought to be Part of the great Allelujah, which began at the cxiiith, and ended at the cxviiith Pſalm; and, by the Jewiſh Ritual, was ordered to be ſung conſtantly at the Paſchal Supper. Others think that it

was a different Hymn, compoſed by Chriſt, and accommodated to the particular Inſtitution of the Euchariſt; but Grotius is of Opinion that it was no other than that Thankſgiving of his, which St. John has recorded in the xviith Chapter of his Goſpel. As our Bleſſed Saviour, however, in all his religious Conduct, was no Lover of Innovations, it ſeems more probable, that, upon this Occaſion, he made uſe of the Pſalms that were then cuſtomary in the Jewiſh Church, in which (as the Jews obſerve) are mentioned the Sorrows of the Meſſiah, and the Reſurrection of the Dead.

The Brook Cedron, in the Old Teſtament, is called Kidron, and runs along the Bottom of the Valley of Jehoſhaphat, which lies to the Eaſt between Jeruſalem and Mount Olivet. Into this Valley was conveyed the Blood, poured out at the Foot of the Altar, which, as it diſcoloured the Water, gave it the Name Cedron (as ſome think) from the Word Kiddar, which ſignifies Blackneſs; tho' others rather imagine, that it had that Name from the Cedar-Trees that were planted on each Side of it.

The Garden of Gethſemane, which took its Name from the Wine-Preſſes in it (as Mr. Maundrel informs us) is an even Plat of Ground, not fifty-ſeven Yards ſquare, lying between the Foot of Mount Olivet, and the Brook Cedron. It is well planted with Olive Trees, and thoſe of ſo old a Growth, that they are believed to be the ſame that ſtood here in our Saviour's Time; but this is hardly poſſible. At the upper Corner of the Garden is a flat naked Ledge of Rock, ſuppoſed to be the Place, on which the Apoſtle Peter, James and John fell aſleep, during our Lord's Agony: A few Paces from thence is a Grotto, in which he is ſaid to have undergone that bitter Part of his Paſſion; and (what is very remarkable) in the Midſt of the Garden there is a ſmall Slip of Ground, twelve Yards long, and one broad, reputed the very Path, on which the Traitor Judas walked up to Chriſt, when he ſaid, "Hail Maſter, and kiſſed him," which the Turks themſelves have walled in, as accounting the Ground accurſed, on which was acted ſuch an infamous Tragedy.

The Paſſage in Zachariah, to which our Saviour alludes, when he tells them what ſhould befal both him and them, that very Night, is this, "Awake, O Sword, againſt my Shepherd, and againſt the Man that is my Fellow, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. Smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep ſhall be ſcattered, and I will turn my Hand upon the little ones:" Where we may obſerve, that our Saviour only cites the Words in the Middle of the Verſe, becauſe, indeed, thoſe that both preceded and followed them, were not at all to his Purpoſe: And in this he imitated the antient Doctors of the Jewiſh Church, who, in their Allegations of Scripture Paſſages, were wont to make uſe of no more than what was ſubſervient to their Argument. Some, however, imagine, becauſe the Words in Zachariah ſeem primarily to relate to an evil Shepherd, to whom God threatens

threatens the Sword, that Chriſt does not mention them as a Prediction concerning him and his Apoſtles, but only as a proverbial Expreſſion: But this, I think, is ſufficiently confuted, by our Lord's ſaying, for it is written. Nor is the Change of the Perſon in the Evangeliſt, from what occurs in the Prophet, of any Moment, becauſe it was cuſtomary with the Jewiſh Doctors, in their Citations of Scripture, to make ſuch Alterations.

We may be bold to affirm of St. Peter's Reſolution, that it was an honeſt one, i. e. both as juſt in the Matter, and as ſincere in the Intention, as ever was made by Man, or ever will be made to the End of the World; and yet this Reſolution miſcarried, and ended only in the Shame of the Reſolver. St. Chryſoſtom takes Notice of three Faults that may be reckoned in it. Firſt, The little Conſideration Peter had of our Saviour's Predictions concerning his Fall. Secondly, The Preference which he gave himſelf above the Reſt of his Brethren: And Thirdly, The Preſumption he places in his own Strength, inſtead of imploring Ability of him, whence all human Sufficiency is derived; and therefore the Son of God, ſays he, ſuffered him to fall, in order to cure his Arrogance and vain Confidence in himſelf.

Our Saviour's Obſervation, that though "the Spirit was willing, yet the Fleſh was weak" is not intended, as an Excuſe or Mitigation of the Apoſtles ſinful Neglect of their Maſter, but as a Motive to their Vigilance and Prayer, and ſeem to imply thus much, "You have all made large Promiſes, that if you ſhould die with me, you would not forſake me; and this you ſaid really, and with a Promiſe to do it: Yet let me tell you, when the Temptation actually aſſaults, when Fear, Shame and Pain, the Danger of Puniſhment, and of Death, are within View, and preſent to your Senſe, the Weakneſs of the Fleſh will certainly prevail over theſe Reſolutions, if you uſe not the greateſt Vigilance, and do not pray with Fervency for the divine Aſſiſtance."

The Words in the original Text, concerning our Lord's ſweating large Drops of Blood, mean only that it was thick and viſcous, like Blood falling from the Noſe, in a ſmall Clot, at the End of any one's Bleeding; but, ſince in ſome Diſtemper (as Ariſtotle tells us) it is no uncommon Thing for People to ſweat Blood; and, when Men are bitten with a certain Kind of Serpents in India (according to the Account of Diodorus Siculus) they are tormented with exceſſive Pains, and generally ſeized with a bloody Sweat; we cannot ſee, why this Agony of our Saviour's might not be ſo violent, as to force Blood out of his Capillary Veſſels, and mix it with Sweat.

St. Luke is the only Evangeliſt that makes mention of the Attendance of an Angel upon our Saviour, in this Time of his Agony; and as there were ſeveral, both Latin and Greek Copies, that, in St. Jerom's Time, wanted this Part of the Hiſtory, Epiphanes imagines, that this was a Correction of ſome ignorant, though perhaps, well meaning

meaning Chriſtians, who, being offended at the ſuppoſed Weakneſs that appears in our Saviour, upon this Occaſion, left it out of their Copies; never conſidering that the Divinity which dwelled in him, had, at this Time, ſubſtracted its Influence, ſo that being left to his human Nature only, he needed the Comfort of an Angel: Otherwiſe, as with a Word, he made the whole Band of Soldiers fall to the Ground, and with a Touch he healed the Ear of Malchus, he even now gave ſufficient Indications of the Divinity reſiding in him.

At the Time of the Paſſover, it was cuſtomary for the Roman Preſident to ſend a whole Band of a thouſand Men, for a Guard to the Temple; and it ſeems to be ſome of theſe that came to apprehend our Saviour, becauſe, by Judas's giving them a Sign, whereby they might know him, it looks as if they were Strangers to his Perſon.

It is probable he thought they could not apprehend our Saviour, but that, as Jeſus had, at other Time, conveyed himſelf from the Multitude, when they attempted to ſtone him, John viii. 59. and to caſt him down a Precipice, Luke iv. 30. ſo he would have done now; and that, when he found he did not reſcue himſelf, " he repented and hanged himſelf, Matt. xxvii 5.

The Reproof is expreſſed in theſe Words,—" Judas betrayeſt thou the Son of Man with a Kiſs?" Luke xxii. 18. Firſt, to betray, in this Caſe, was equivalent to Murder. It was to deliliver him into their Hands, who he knew, both from common Rumour, and his Maſter's own Words, Matt. xvi. 21. had a Deſign upon his Life; and therefore this could not he done without expreſs Malice; but Secondly, This Betrayer was a Servant, one who had given up his Name and Faith to our Lord, and done himſelf the Honour, at leaſt, if no other Benefit, to preach his Goſpel, and to work Miracles by the Power of his Commiſſion; and therefore, for ſuch an one to betray him, could not be done without great Perfidiouſneſs. Thirdly, The Perſon betrayed is called the Son of Man, which is both the humbleſt and moſt obliging of our Saviour's Titles, and implies that even to Judas himſelf he had always been a kind and gracious Maſter, had treated him with the ſame Reſpect, and given him the ſame Advice and Overtures, that he had done to the reſt of the Twelve; and therefore to betray him was high Ingratitude. Fourthly, and laſtly, to betray him with a Kiſs, which all the World had been uſed to interpret as a conſtant Symbol either of Love, or Homage, (both which his Maſter had ſo well well merited at his Hands) and now to make this a Signal of his Treaſon, was to play a Piece of the moſt groſs Hyprocriſy. So ſevere is the Accuſation, which our Lord brings againſt his abandoned Apoſtle, tho' expreſſed in the mildeſt Terms!

Before our Saviour left the Houſe where he ſupped, he ſaid to his Apoſtles, " He that has no Sword, let him ſell his Garment and buy one," Luke xxii. 56. but that this is no Command to them to buy Swords, or to uſe them in

in the Defence of their Maſter, when he ſhould be apprehended, is apparent from his ſaying, that two Swords were enough, ver. 38. which certainly could never be ſufficient to repel that Band of armed Men, which he foreknew would certainly come againſt him; and from his reprehending Peter for uſing one in this Manner, Matt. xxvi. 42. which, if he intended his Words to be underſtood literally, was no diſcommendable Thing. They therefore are only an Admonition to his Apoſtles, that Times are now become ſo perilous, that if Things were to be acted by human Power, there would be no more Need for Swords than ever; for ſuch ſymbolical Ways of Expreſſion were very common among the Eaſtern People. Some Annotators, however, have obſerved, that the Reaſon why any Swords (as we read but of two) were found in our Saviour's Family, was, that thereby they might ſecure themſelves from Beaſts of Prey, which in thoſe Parts were very frequent in the Night-time.

Our Saviour's Words to Peter, are theſe, "Put up thy Sword into its Place, for all that take the Sword, ſhall periſh by the Sword," Matt. xxvi. 52. But this Rebuke we muſt not ſo underſtand, as abſolutely forbidding all Manner of uſing the Sword among Chriſtians, but only as teaching us the great Duty of Submiſſion to the Powers that are ſet over us. One private Perſon is, no doubt, in Defence of himſelf againſt the Aſſault of another private Perſon, permitted to unſheath his Sword; but if he once granted, that private Perſons, when they think themſelves injured by Magiſtrates, may take up the Sword againſt them, Tumults would be endleſs, and the Authority of the Laws, and the Deciſion of Judges precarious: "If therefore neither the Malice of the Jews, nor the Innocence of our Lord; if neither the Truth of our Religion, perſecuted in its Founder, nor the apparent Marks of Malice and Envy, of Violence and Oppreſſion, which appeared in the whole Courſe of their Perſecution of him, were ſufficient to warrant St. Peter to draw the Sword, in his Defenſe, againſt the legal Authority, by which they acted, we muſt conclude, that neither will any of theſe Pretences ſuffice to juſtify any other Chriſtians in the like Circumſtances now: But if it pleaſe God, at any Time, to permit the lawful Powers to be againſt us, we muſt ſubmit patiently to their Authority, and not with this warm Apoſtle, draw the Sword againſt thoſe to whom God has committed the Power of the Sword." It may be queſtioned, however, whether this is the true Import of the Words, which Grotius, and ſome others have thus interpreted,—"Put up thy Sword, there is no need for thy uſing it in my Defence againſt the Injuries of the Jews; for by God's Sentence and Decree, they who take the Sword, to ſhed the Blood of the Innocent, ſhall periſh by the Sword; and this the Jews ſhall find, by the tremendous Vengeance, which the Sword of the Romans ſhall execute upon them for this Fact." Which Interpretation is confirmed by what we

we read in Rev. xiii. 10. "He that killeth with the Sword, must be killed with the Sword." Here is the Ground "of the Faith and Patience of the Saints," viz. that God, to whom Vengeance belongs, will plead their Cause, and recompence Vengeance to their Enemies.

A Legion, in the Roman Militia, was a Body of Men consisting of six Thousand, composed each of ten Cohorts, as a Cohort was of fifty Maniples, and a Maniple of fifteen Men; so that twelve Legions would amount to seventy-two Thousand Angels; but in this our Saviour means no more than a great Number.

Who the young Man was, who fled away naked out of the Hands of the Soldiers, who took him for one of Christ's Disciples, has been a Matter of some Dispute among the Ancients. Epiphanius and St. Jerom are of Opinion, that it was James the Brother of our Lord; but upon our Lord's being apprehended, he, among the rest, forsook him, and fled, and we hear nothing of his Return. St. Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Gregory have a strong Imagination that it was John, the beloved Apostle; but John, we read, was with Christ in the Garden, cloathed, and it cannot therefore easily be conceived how he came to fly naked. It seems most probable therefore, that this young Man might be no ways related to our Saviour, but, hearing a Noise in the Garden, which might not be far distant from the House, where he lodged, in the Village of Gethsemane, he arose and followed the Company in his Night-gown (as we have rendered it) in pure Curiosity to see what was the Matter, and when the Guards were for seizing him, he fled away naked, i. e. with nothing but his Shirt on, for so the Expression may be understood.

Here let us resume our Story.

The Company thus carrying away Jesus, brought him before Annas, who was Father-in-Law to Caiaphas the High-priest, and had formerly borne the same Office: But Annas sent them to Caiaphas, in whose Palace the Sanhedrim was still sitting, even tho' it was thus late at Night. Caiaphas examined him a great deal concerning both his Doctrine and Disciples; but when our Saviour answered, "That, since he had always taught in the most public Manner in the Synagogues and in the Temple, he should rather enquire of those who had been his constant Hearers." An Officer standing by, gave him a Blow on the Face, pretending that he had not used the High-priest with Respect enough; to which our Lord only replied, "That if he had said any Thing amiss, the Law was open, and he might implead him, but if not, he had no Cause or Authority to strike him.

The Council perceiving, that, from his own Confession, they could raise no Accusation against him, called over the false Witnesses, that they had procured; but these, either disagreed in their Stories, or came not sufficiently up to the point. Two Persons indeed were consistent in what they deposed, viz. that they had heard him say, "that he would pull down the Temple of God, and in three Days rebuild it. But, as this Accusation was false

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in Fact, and founded only upon a figurative Expreſſion of our Saviour's, it was not thought to amount to any thing capital.

All this while our Saviour made no Manner of Reply to the Evidences that were produced againſt him; whereof when the High-prieſt aſked the Reaſon, and ſtill (he continued ſilent, having one more Queſtion in Reſerve, which if he anſwered in the negative, would according to his Notion) make him an Impoſtor, and if in the affirmative, a Blaſphemer, he ſtood up, and, in the Name of the living God, adjured him to declare, whether he was the Meſſiah, the Son of God, or not. The Reverence which our Lord paid to that ſacred Name, made him immediately anſwer, and that in direct Terms, "That he was; and of this they would be convinced, when they ſhould ſee him ſitting on the Right-hand of the Almighty, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven." Whereupon the High-prieſt, in Teſtimony of his Abhorrence, rent his Clothes, as if he had heard the groſſeſt Blaſphemy, and then addreſſing himſelf to the Council, told them, that there was no Occaſion for any farther Witneſſes, becauſe what the Priſoner ſaid was palpable Blaſphemy, and ſo demanded their Opinion, who unanimouſly agreed, that, according to their Law, he was guilty of Death.

With this Reſolution they repaired to their reſpective Homes (for now it was late) and left our Lord to the Mercy of the Soldiers, and the High-prieſt's Servants, who offered all the Acts of Inſolence and Effrontery that they could invent, to his ſacred Perſon; whilſt ſome ſpat on him, others buffetted him, others blindfolded him, and others again ſmiting him with their Fiſts, called on him to prophecy "who it was that ſtruck him;" with many more Indignities, and abominable Blaſphemies, which muſt have been greater than all Patience to have borne, had his Meekneſs and Patience been leſs than infinite.

During this melancholy Scene, Peter, whoſe Fears had made him fly from his Maſter in the Garden, having a little recovered his Spirits, and hoping to paſs undiſcovered in the Throng, ventured in, among others, to ſee the Iſſue of this fatal Night; and by the Intereſt of his Fellow-Diſciple, John, (who went with him) was let in by a Maid-ſervant to the High-prieſt's Palace. It was now cold Weather; and the Servants and Officers having kindled a Fire in the Common-hall, Peter went in, and ſat down among them to warm himſelf: when the Maid, who let him in, fixing her Eyes upon him, was confident ſhe knew him, and accordingly told the Company, that he was a Diſciple of Jeſus of Nazareth, which he poſitively denied to them all, and, as he withdrew into the Porch, heard the Cock crow, but his troubled Thoughts took no Notice of it.

While he was in the Porch, another Maid charged him with the ſame Thing, but he denied it again, not only with the ſame Confidence, but with the Solemnity of an Oath; and,

about an Hour after, when another inferred from his Dialect, that he muſt neceſſarily be a Galilean; and a Relation of the Man, whoſe Ear he had cut off, ſtrongly affirmed, that he ſaw him in the Garden; this ſo intimidated him, that, with horrid Oaths and Imprecations upon himſelf, he denied the Matter; till the Cock crew the ſecond Time, and our Saviour (who was then in the Hall) turning to Peter, gave him ſuch a Glance, as reminded him of his Prediction, and the Foulneſs of his own Crime; whereupon, being ſtung with Compunction, and ſadly oppreſſed with Shame and Grief, he went out, and wept; he wept abundantly, he wept bitterly.

Early next Morning (Good Friday) the Sanhedrim met again in a full Body, at their Room in the Temple, whither they ordered Jeſus to be brought; and, having again enquired of him, whether he was the true Meſſiah, and the Son of God, and again receiving the ſame Anſwer from him, they adjudged him guilty of Blaſphemy, and, accordingly, having condemned him, carried him to the Roman Governor, whoſe Name, at that Time, was Pontius Pilate, deſiring of him to ratify their Sentence, and demanded a Warrant for his Execution.

Judas, in the mean Time, watching the Iſſue of theſe Proceedings, and finding that his Maſter was delivered to the ſecular Power, repented of his Perfidy, and taking the Money, which was the Reward of his Treaſon, went to the Council, and threw it among them, declaring openly, that he had acted very wickedly in betraying the innocent Blood: But, as the People that employ ſuch Inſtruments, have no Regard to what becomes of them, all the Comfort that he had from them was, that, "ſince it was his own Act and Deed, it was his Buſineſs to look to it, not theirs; ſo that, being tortured with Agonies of Guilt, and finding no Relief any where, he went, and hanged himſelf; but in his Death there was ſomething ſo particular, that it made all the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem take notice of it. The Money which he threw among the Council, the Prieſts thought not proper to put into the Treaſury, becauſe it was the Price of Blood, and therefore they purchaſed with it a Spot of Ground, then called the Potters Field (but, afterwards, the Field of Blood) for a Place of Interment for Strangers.

Once more let us review what we have advanced in the laſt Period.

Annas (who by Joſephus is called Ananus) had been High-prieſt, and enjoyed that Dignity for eleven Years; nay even after he was depoſed, retained ſtill the Title, and had a great Share of the Management of all publick Affairs. When John the Baptiſt entered upon the Exerciſe of his Miniſtry, he is called the High-prieſt in Conjunction with Caiaphas, Luke iii. 2. though, at that Time, he did not act in this Character: when our Saviour was apprehended, he was firſt brought to his Houſe, according to St. John, ch. xviii. 14. though the other Evangeliſts paſs that over in Silence,

lence, becauſe there was nothing done to him there; and it looks, as if he had been only detained there until the Council, met at the Houſe of Caiaphas, was ready for him.

Some of the Antients are of Opinion, that this Officer was Malchus, the ſame Perſon, whoſe Ear our Lord had healed in the Garden. The more ungrateful he! And Selden pretends, that in this Act, he did nothing contrary to the Law of his Country, which allowed every Iſraelite, by what they call the Judgment of Zeal, to avenge, upon the Spot, all publick Injury done to God, or his Temple, to the Nation in general, or the High-prieſt in particular.

From the Defence which our Saviour makes for himſelf, we may learn, that we are not literally to underſtand his Precept of turning the other Cheek to him that ſmites us, ſince, inſtead of doing this, we find him endeavouring to vindicate the Innocence of his Words; and from hence we may obſerve likewiſe, that to ſtand upon the Defence of our own Innocency, cannot be contrary to the Chriſtian Duties of Patience and Forgiveneſs.

The Jews in general, but eſpecially their Judges and Magiſtrates, had a Cuſtom of conjuring by the Name of God, or of exacting an Oath of thoſe, whoſe Crimes did not ſufficiently appear by the Evidence of Witneſſes, or any other Means. The Perſon, thus interrogated, was obliged to ſpeak Truth; and, in all doubtful Caſes, his Confeſſion or Denial was deciſive, either to acquit or condemn himſelf.

The rending the Clothes was a Token of Indignation, holy Zeal, and Piety, among the Jews, expreſſed on ſeveral Occaſions, eſpecially of Grief, in Humiliation; and of Anger, on hearing any blaſphemous Speech. This however was forbidden the High-prieſt, not only as to his ſarcedotal Veſtments, but alſo as to his other Garments, becauſe he was not to appear before God in the Habit of a Mourner; but they, by their Traditions, had ſo qualified that Precept, as to allow him to rend his Clothes at the Bottom, tho' he was not permitted to do it from the Top to the Breaſt.

From the High-prieſt's rending his Clothes, as ſuppoſing Chriſt had ſpoken the groſſeſt Blaſphemy, we may obſerve, that the Jews of that Age did not think, that the Meſſiah was to be God, but only a Man, who could not challenge to himſelf Divinity; ſeeing they never concluded our Lord to be a Blaſphemer, becauſe he ſaid he was the Chriſt, but only becauſe he ſaid he was the Son of God, and thereby made himſelf equal with God.

The Jews themſelves allow (as Dr. Lightfoot informs us) that there might be Froſt and Snow at the Time of the Paſſover; and a common Thing it was for great Dews to fall then, which would make the Air cold, until the Sun had exhaled them.

It is reported of St. Peter, that ever after, when he heard the Cock crow, he wept, remembering the old Inſtru-

ment of his Repentance and Converſion, and his own Unworthineſs, for which he never ceaſed to do Acts of Sorrow and Penance.

The Galileans ſpake the ſame Language that the reſt of the Jews did; but then they had a certain uncouth Accent, and Manner of Expreſſion, which diſtinguiſhed them from others, and made them to be contemned and ridiculed by the Natives of Judea.

Some of the Ancients have taken great Pains to extenuate the horrid Oaths and Imprecations of St. Peter, with which he denied Chriſt. St. Ambroſe on Luke, and Hilary on Matthew, both aſſert, that the Apoſtle did not lye in ſaying, "I know not the Man," but only diſguiſed the Truth, renouncing Chriſt in the Quality of a Man, but not as the Son of God. But this (according to St. Jerom) is to defend the Servant, by accuſing the Maſter of a Lye; for if St. Peter did not actually deny him, our Lord muſt have falſly affirmed, "thou ſhalt deny me thrice." The Opinion of thoſe therefore is rather to be embraced, who acknowledge that St. Peter, by denying Chriſt with his Mouth, committed a mortal Sin, and fell from Grace; and, as it is certain, that, by confirming the Denial with an Oath, and adding horrid Execrations to it, his Sin was highly aggravated, inſtead of accounting (as ſome do) his Denial a Sin of Infirmity, wherein his Heart was true, though his Mouth was falſe, we can hardly think, that he could do all this without great Checks of Conſcience; and that, conſequently, for the preſent, he was in a State of Defection, though his bitter Weeping, and quick Repentance, after that Chriſt had looked upon him, might make an Atonement for his Tranſgreſſion.

The Aſſembly, which was held the Night before, and wherein our Saviour was declared worthy of Death, was neither general nor judicial, according to the Senſe of the Law, which did not allow of Juſtice to be adminiſtered in private, or in the Night-time: And therefore the High-prieſts and Rulers met again in the Morning, in the Council Chamber in the Temple, (which they could not do the Night before, becauſe the Temple was then always ſhut) there to re-examine our Saviour and condemn him in Form.

As Jeruſalem the People ſhew you, at this Time, the Palace of Pilate, or rather the Place, where they ſay it ſtood, for now an ordinary Turkiſh Houſe poſſeſſes its Room. In this pretended Houſe, (which ſtands not far from St. Stephen's Gate, and borders on the Area of the Temple, on the North-ſide) they ſhew you a Room, in which Chriſt was mocked with the Enſigns of Royalty, and buffeted by the Soldiers; and, on the other Side of the Street, which was anciently another Part of the Palace) is the Room, where they ſay our Lord was ſcourged.

It is not certainly known of what Family, or Country, this Governor Pontius Pilate was, though it is generally believed that he was of Rome, at leaſt of Italy. He ſucceeded Gratus in the Government of Judæa, in which he

he continued fourteen Years, i. e. from the twelfth, to the twenty-ſecond of Tiberius, and is repreſented by Philo (de Legatione ad Caium) as a Man of an impetuous and obſtinate Temper; and a Judge, who uſed to ſell Juſtice, and for Money pronounced any Sentence that was deſired. The ſame Author makes Mention of his Rapines, his Injuries, his Murders, the Torment, he inflicted upon the Innocent, and the Perſons, he put to Death without any Form of Proceſs. In ſhort, he deſcribes him as a Man, that exerciſed an exceſſive Cruelty, during the whole Time of his Government, from which he was depoſed by Vitellius, the Proconſul of Syria; arriving at Rome, the Emperor Caligula baniſhed him to Vienna in Gaul, where he was reduced to ſuch Extremity, that he killed himſelf with his own Hands. The Evangeliſts call him Governor (though, properly ſpeaking, he was no more than the Procurator of Judea) not only becauſe Governor was a Name of general Uſe, but becauſe Pilate acted as one, by taking upon him to judge in criminal Matters as his Predeceſſors had done, and other Procurators in the ſmall Provinces of the Empire, where there was no Pro-conſul, conſtantly did.

Such is the Purchaſe of Treaſon, and the Reward of Covetouſneſs. It is cheap in its Offers, momentary in its Poſſeſſion, unſatisfying in its Fruition, uncertain in its Stay, ſudden in its Departure, horrid in the Remembrance, and a Ruin, a certain and miſerable Ruin in the Event.

Though the original Words for he went and hanged himſelf may perhaps mean no more, than his falling into a violent ſuffocating Fit of Sadneſs and Deſpair, which might ſtop all the natural Paſſages, and ſo, for want of Vent, make him burſt aſunder, and his Guts break out at his Navel; yet to me the moſt natural and obvious Signification of the Word is preferable. The only Difficulty is, how to reconcile his hanging of himſelf with what is elſewhere recorded of him, viz. that, "falling headlong, he burſt aſunder in the midſt, and all his Bowels guſhed out," Acts i. 18. But to this Purpoſe the Conjectures of ſeveral have been various. Some think, that he hanged himſelf on a Tree, but that, the Branch yielding, and bending to the Ground, he was not, at that Time, ſtrangled, but afterwards fell into a Dropſy, of which he burſt and died. Others imagine, that he threw himſelf from ſome Place, higher than that, on which he intended to hang himſelf, and that, by the Force of the Swing, when he caſt himſelf off, the Rope broke, ſo that he fell to the Ground, and burſt. Others ſuppoſe, that, as he might hang himſelf in ſome private Place, he probably there continued, until his Belly ſwelled (as it commonly happens to ſuch as die in that Manner) and, in a ſhort Time his Bowels burſt out: And for this they have the Authority of ſome Copies, which, inſtead of falling down headlong, have, thus hanging, he burſt aſunder, and all his Bowels guſhed out. But, in whatever Manner this came

came to paſs, I cannot ſee, why, in this extraordinary Inſtance, we may not admit of more than ordinary Providence, to make the Death of this Traitor more remarkable.

It was a Cuſtom among the Jews, which was afterwards imitated by the firſt Chriſtians, that it ſhould not be lawful for Executioners to offer any Thing, or for any Alms to be received of them; and ſo, by Analogy, any Money with which a Life was bought, was not to be put into the Treaſury.

The Valley of Jehoſhaphat runs croſs the Mouth of another Valley, called the Valley of Hinnon, lying at the Bottom of Mount Sion. On the Weſt-ſide of the Valley is the Place called the Potters Field, where, not improbably, the People of that Trade were uſed to dry their Pots, before they baked them. It was afterwards called the Field of Blood, for the Reaſon that the Evangeliſt aſſigns; but at preſent, from the Veneration which it has obtained among Chriſtians, it is named Campo Sancto, or the Holy Field. It is a ſmall Plat of Ground, not above thirty Yards long, and about half as much broad; and one Moiety of it is taken up by a ſquare Fabrick, about twelve Yards high, built for a Charnel-houſe, and covered over with a Vault, in which are ſome Openings, to let down the Bodies that are to be buried there. The Earth muſt certainly be impregnated with a very corroſive Salt, if what ſome tell us be true, viz. that it can diſſolve a Body in the Space of twenty-four Hours. Thoſe however who have looked down through the Opening, tell us, they could ſee many Bodies under ſeveral Degrees of Decay, from whence they conjectured, that this Grave does not make ſuch quick diſpatch with the Corps committed to it, as is commonly reported. The Armenians have the Command of this Burying-place, for which they pay to the Turks a Rent of a Zequin a Day; and a little below the Campo Sancto, is ſhewn an intricate Cave, or a Sepulchre, conſiſting of ſeveral Rooms, one within another, in which the Apoſtles are ſaid to have hid themſelves, when they forſook their Maſter and fled.

The Strangers, for whom the Potters Field was deſigned a Burying-place, may be either Men of other Nations, with whom the Jews would have no Commerce, even when they were dead, and therefore provided a ſeparate Burying-place for them; or they might be Jews, who coming from Jeruſalem to ſacrifice, died there, before their return Home, and ſo the Prieſts provided this Burying-place.

Let us now proceed in our Relation: When the Members of the Sanhedrim came to the Governor's Palace, they refuſed to go into the Judgment-hall, for fear of contracting ſome Pollution, and therefore Pilate went out to them; and as he underſtood that they had already paſſed Sentence upon him, he demanded the Grounds of their Accuſation againſt him: But, being unwilling that any Enquiry ſhould be made into the Particulars of their Proceedings, they anſwered in general, that, " if he were not a Criminal, they would not have brought him to him."

Imagining

Imagining therefore that the Proſecution was about ſome Matters relating to their Religion, the Governor deſired, they would take him, and judge him according to their own Law; but to this they replied, " that it was not permitted them to put any Man to Death."

By theſe reſerved Anſwers, Pilate perceiving that their Intention was to make him the Inſtrument of their Malice againſt an innocent Man, refuſed to intermeddle in the Affair, unleſs they would exhibit ſome Articles of Accuſation againſt him. Knowing therefore that Herod was a Creature of the Roman Court, and a Slave to its Greatneſs, they alledged againſt our Lord, That he was guilty of ſeditious Practices, of diſſuading the Payment of the Tribute to Cæſar, and of ſetting himſelf up for a King. Pilate hearing the Name of a King, thought himſelf concerned to examine that Point; and therefore returning to the Judgment-hall, and ſeating himſelf upon the Tribunal, he aſked Jeſus, whether " he was the King of the Jews?" which our Lord never pretended to deny; but then he informed the Governor, that " his Kingdom was not of this World," and could therefore give no Umbrage to the Romans; for that, had it been a worldly Kingdom, his Subjects and Followers would certainly have fought for him, and ſaved him from the Hands of the Jews. When Pilate heard that he diſclaimed all Right to ſecular Kingdoms, he thought he had nothing to do to examine him about the Nature of his ſpiritual Empire; and therefore withdrawing from the Court into the Veſtibulum, (where his Accuſers were impatiently expecting the Ratification of their Sentence, in order to Execution) contrary to their Hopes, he plainly told them, that he found " nothing worthy of Death in him."

Upon this Diſappointment, the Chief-prieſts and Elders grew exceedingly fierce and clamorous, repreſenting our Lord as a turbulent Mover of the People, and charging him with the ſpreading of ſeditious Principles, through all Galilee and Judea, even as far as Jeruſalem. Pilate hearing them name Galilee, and underſtanding that he was a Galilean, and conſequently belonged to Herod's Juriſdiction; in order to get rid of the Importunity of the Jews, and withal to free himſelf from this odd and puzzling Affair, he ſent him immediately to Herod, who was then at Jeruſalem upon the Occaſion of the Feaſt. Herod was no leſs proud of the Honour done him by Pilate, than glad of this Opportunity to gratify his Curioſity. For, having heard much of our Saviour's Fame, he expected to ſee ſome Miracle or other done by him, but found himſelf ſadly diſappointed. For, tho' the Scribes and Rulers purſued him with their Accuſations to Herod's Palace, and Herod, in hearing the Cauſe, aſked him ſeveral Queſtions, yet he would not vouchſafe ſo much as one Anſwer; which made the Tetrarch look upon him as an inſignificant Perſon; and, accordingly, having committed him to the Deriſions and Inſults of his Guards, who uſed him with the utmoſt Indignity

nity, he ſent him back again to Pilate, arrayed in a white Robe; whether it was to make a Mock of him, or to vindicate his Innocence, or both; but ſo it was, that, from that Time, Herod and Pilate (who before were at great Variance) were upon this Occaſion, perfectly reconciled.

When our Lord was remanded back in this Manner, Pilate addreſſed himſelf to the Prieſts and Rulers of the People, telling them, "That, tho' they had brought this Man before him, as a ſeditious Perſon, and a Seducer of the People, yet, upon Examination, he could not find him guilty of any of the Crimes that were laid to his Charge; that this was not his own Opinion only, but that Herod (who was a more competent Judge of the Affair, and to whom he had ſent him, on purpoſe to take Cognizance of it) had no ways ſignified that his Crimes were capital; and therefore, inſtead of taking away his Life, he propoſed ſome leſſer Puniſhment, if they thought fit, ſuch as ſcourging him a little with Whips, and ſo diſmiſſing him." But this Lenity was ſo diſagreeable to their enraged Temper, that they peremptorily demanded Execution, ſaying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate, ſtill tender of ſhedding innocent Blood, expoſtulated the Matter with them, deſiring to know what Evil he had done, for as for his Part, he could find no Fault in him, much leſs any Crimes deſerving of Death; but this did but the more exaſperate, and made them more clamorous for ſpeedy Execution.

The Governor had one Expedient more, which he thought would not fail him. Every Paſſover he was obliged by a certain Cuſtom, to pardon one Criminal, whom the Jews ſhould nominate, and therefore when the People came, and were urgent with him to grant them that uſual Favour, he propoſed two Perſons to them, Barabbas, a notorious Malefactor, who, in an Inſurrection with ſome other ſeditious Perſons had committed Murther, and Jeſus, who was called Chriſt, never doubting, but that the Populace, who he knew were better inclined to our Lord, than their Rulers, would have preferred an innocent Man, before a Thief and a Murtherer; but, at the Inſtigation of their Prieſts, and others, they required, that the Favour might be granted to Barabbas. Hereupon, when the Governor deſired to know, what he was to do with the Perſon, whom they called Chriſt, they, one and all, cried out, Crucify him, crucify him: And as he ſtill inſiſted on his Innocence, and propoſed ſome lighter Puniſhment (which was all, to be ſure, that he could deſerve) they began to redouble their Clamours, and, in the moſt tumultuous Manner imaginable, demanded that he might be crucified.

The Governor, in the mean Time, received a Meſſage from his Wife, deſiring him, by no Means, to condemn the innocent Perſon, that was then before him, becauſe upon his Account, ſhe had that Night many frightful and uneaſy Dreams, which made him the more earneſt to releaſe him, or at leaſt

leaſt to ſpare his Life; and therefore in Hopes of pacifying the People's Rage, he ordered him to be ſcourged. The Soldiers, who were to do this, thinking it not enough to execute their Orders, took him into the Common-hall, where ſtripping him of his own Cloaths, they put a looſe purple Coat about him, for a Robe; a Wreath of Thorns upon his Head, for a Crown; and a Reed in his Hand, for a Sceptre; and then in Deriſion, ſaluted him, and bowing their Knees, mocked him with the ſham Profeſſion of Allegiance. After this they ſpat in his Face, ſmote him on the Cheek, and (to make his Crown of Thorns pierce the deeper) ſtruck him on the Head with his fantaſtick Sceptre; and then leading him to a Pillar (where they tied him faſt) they ſcourged him with Whips, and with ſuch unrelenting Cruelty, that his tender Fleſh was torn in Pieces, and the Pavement crimſoned with his precious Blood.

In this piteous Plight, with his Head, Face, and Body imbrued in Blood, and with his mock Ornaments on, Pilate, in hopes of moving the People's Compaſſion, ordered him to be brought forth, and when he appeared, See the Man, ſays he, this rueful Spectacle of ſuffering Innocence! But ſo far were they from melting at the Sight of ſo deplorable an Object, that they raiſed their Cries ſtill louder and louder for his Crucifixion; and when the Governor ſtill inſiſted on his Innocence, We have a Law, ſay they, and by our Law he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of God.

These laſt Words raiſed ſome Terror in Pilate, and gave him more Uneaſineſs: For, taking them in ſuch a Senſe as an Heathen might well put upon them, he began to apprehend, that if he ſhould proceed to Sentence againſt him, he might deſtroy not only an innocent Perſon, but poſſibly ſome Hero, or mighty Demi-god, and ſo at once commit an Act of Injuſtice and Impiety both. He therefore, returning with Jeſus to the Judgment-Seat again, began to enquire into his Original and Pedigree: But, as it was no Part of our Saviour's Intention to eſcape Death, he thought it not proper to ſay any Thing in his own Juſtification; until, his Silence having given the Governor ſome Offence (inſomuch that he put him in Mind, that his Life or Death, his Releaſe or Crucifixion, depended on him) he then replied, that ſuch Power he could not have over him, were it not permitted him from above, and that therefore they, who had delivered him up, had the greater Sin to anſwer for, than he.

This Anſwer made Pilate ſtill the more deſirous to releaſe him; which when the Jews perceived, they found out at laſt this Expedient, to work upon his Fears, by telling him plainly, that, if he did not puniſh a Man who ſet himſelf up for a King, he was an Enemy to the Emperor; a Menace which he, who knew the jealous Temper of his Maſter Tiberius full well, and how eaſily a wrong Repreſentation of theſe Proceedings might prove his Ruin, had not the Courage to withſtand: And therefore, returning to the

Hall he ordered Jeſus to be brought, in the ſame Habit, to his public Tribunal, which ſtood in a paved Place, called Gabatha, and, before he gave Sentence, calling for Water, and waſhing his Hands before all the People, he ſolemnly declared, that he was innocent of the Blood of that juſt Man, and that they muſt anſwer for it; whereupon the whole Body of the People cried out, May his Blood fall upon us and our Poſterity. An Imprecation as black as Hell, and which has been too long (may it pleaſe the Almighty to ſhorten their Puniſhment!) verified upon them.

Here, as uſual, we ſhall illuſtrate what has been advanced.

The Sanhedrim refuſed to go into the Judgment-hall, becauſe in the Governor's Palace there was a Guard of Roman Soldiers, and a great Company of Servants; and, as they were Heathens, they thought that, by touching any of them, they ſhould be defiled, and conſequently made incapable of eating the Paſſover, of which no unclean Perſon was to partake. By the Paſſover however, here in John, Chap. xviii. 28. we are not to underſtand the Paſchal Lamb, which the reſt of the Jews, as well as our Saviour, had eaten the Night before, but the Chagigah, or Peace-offering, i. e. the Sheep and Oxen, that were offered all the ſeven Days of the Feaſt, and are expreſly called the Paſſover, Luke xxii. 1. Thus the Jewiſh Doctors remark upon Deut. xvi. 2. Thou ſhall ſacrifice the Paſſover to the Lord, of the Flock, and of the Herd, that the Flock ſignifies the Lambs, which were eaten on the 14th, and the Herd, the Offerings of the Chagigah, which were conſumed on the 15th Day of the Month Niſan. The Jewiſh Rulers therefore would not go into the Judgment-hall, that they might not be unfit to eat the Paſſover, i. e. thoſe Paſchal Offerings of the Herd, which were holy Things, and of which none might eat in their Defilement.

By the Anſwer of the Sanhedrim, "if he were not a Criminal, they would not have brought him to him," they ſeem willing to make Pilate, not ſo much a Judge of the Cauſe, as an Executioner of their Sentence: But there cannot poſſibly be an higher Act of Injuſtice, than to deſire, that a Judge ſhould ſuppoſe the accuſed Perſon guilty of the Crime, without any farther Examination. It is no ſtrange and extraordinary Thing, to ſee innocent Perſons oppreſſed by arbitrary Proceedings, without any legal Proceſs; but for a Man to be brought before a Judge, in order to be delivered up directly to Execution, without any Proof of the Crime, or any Examination concerning it, is a new Way of Oppreſſion, firſt invented and contrived againſt the Saviour of the World.

Whether the Jews had, at this Time, the Power of Life and Death, is a Point, much controverted among the Learned. The Anſwer, which the Jewiſh Rulers here give to Pilate, and the general Opinion of their Rabbins, who ſuppoſe, that their Rulers loſt that Power about forty Years before the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, ſeem to incline

cline to the Negative, but thoſe, who take the other Side of the Queſtion, argue thus,—That the Jews, when reduced to a Roman Province, had ſtill the Privilege granted them, "to uſe the ſacred Inſtitutions and Cuſtoms, that were derived to them from their Fathers;" Joſeph. Antiq. l. c. 17. that it was granted to Hyrcanus, the High-prieſt, that, if any Controverſy ſhould ariſe concerning their Diſcipline, that the Judgment of it ſhould be referred to him; that purſuant to this Grant, we find the High-prieſt, and his Council ſtoning Stephen, not by the Rage of Zealots (as ſome conceive) but according to the Law which requires that the Blaſphemer ſhould be ſtoned, Lev. xxiv. 16. that Saul, armed with the Power of the High-Prieſt and Elders, perſecuted the Jewiſh Chriſtians unto Death, and led them bound to Jeruſalem to be puniſhed, Acts xxiii. 4, 5. that the Jews would have judged Paul, after his own Law, Acts xxiv. 6. and have put him to Death, Acts xxiii. 37. had not Lyſias, the chief Captain, reſcued him from their Hands, which they ſay he did by Violence, i. e. by an Invaſion of their Rights, but he, becauſe he underſtood that Paul was a Roman; and from thence they conclude, that they ſtill retained the Power of judging, and condemning thoſe to Death, who were Jews by Nature and Deſcent, and by their Laws deſerved to die, though, as to ſome Perſons, in ſome Caſes, they had not that Power. Thus when Annas, or Ananus the High-prieſt, killed James, the Brother of our Lord, and ſtoned many Chriſtians, as Tranſgreſſors of the Law, the wiſeſt Part of the Nation (ſays Joſephus) diſliked his Proceedings, becauſe he ſhould not have called his Council concerning Life and Death, without a Licence from Albinus, the Roman Preſident. From whence we may infer, that the Power of inflicting capital Puniſhments, even upon the Jews, converted to the Chriſtian Faith, was then ſo far taken from them, that they could not regularly do it, without firſt obtaining Leave from the Roman Governor; and, in the Caſe of our Bleſſed Saviour, the Jews had debarred themſelves from the Power of putting him to Death, after they had accuſed him before Pilate, not of Crimes committed againſt their Law, but of Sedition, and aſpiring at a Kingdom, to the Prejudice of Cæſar and the Roman Government, whereof it belonged to Pilate, and not to them to judge and determine. And therefore their ſaying to him, "It is not lawful for us to put any Man to Death," John xviii. 31. is looked upon, either as a Kind of Complaint of the Encroachments, which the Romans had made upon their civil Conſtitution, or a mere Pretence, ſince Pilate gave them Power enough, when he bade them take him, and judge him according to their Law; and that the true Reaſons of their bringing him before the Roman Tribunal, were, that he might be condemned for Sedition, which would be a Means to ſecure them from the Rage of the People, and that he might be crucified, which was a Roman Death, and generally inflicted on thoſe, that were found tampering againſt the Government.

When our Lord's Accuſers came before Pilate, they ſaid nothing of this pretended Blaſphemy, his Deſtruction of the Temple, or Violation of the Law of Moſes, becauſe they were Queſtions, that the Governor, they knew, would not concern himſelf with; and therefore they forged ſuch Accuſations againſt him, as they thought might make him odious and ſuſpected to the Roman Government, and oblige Pilate to be ſevere againſt him.

By Chriſt's Anſwer, that his Kingdom was not of this World, he means, that it was not of human Original, but from Heaven, and ſo meddled not with the Affairs of the World; that it had none of the Pomp and Splendor of the World annexed to it; none to fight for it with carnal Weapons, and exerciſe Dominion over Men's Bodies, but over their Souls only; that its Government was ſpiritual, and its Judicatories the Courts of Conſcience; its Tribute a Conformity to the great Laws of Faith, Hope, and Charity; and its only Impoſts, the Duties of an holy Spirit, and the Expreſſions of a religious Worſhip, a reſigned Will, and a conſenting Underſtanding, in which Pilate ſoon perceived that the Intereſt of Cæſar could not be invaded.

They artfully make mention of Galilee, to incite Pilate againſt him, as a ſeditious Perſon, to confirm their own Suggeſtion, that he was ſo; for they give him to think, that as he was a Galilean, he might probably embrace the Opinion of Judas Gaulonites, who had held it not lawful to pay Tribute to Cæſar; a Notion, which the Inhabitants of Galilee had generally imbibed, and, upon that account were always prone to Sedition and Rebellion; for which ſome of them, not long before, had been ſet upon, and ſlain by Pilate.

Pilate's Government did not extend to Galilee, it included Judea only. Herod Antipas, the Son of Herod the Great, was, at this Time, King, or Tetrarch of Galilee, Jeſus, conſequently, was his Subject; and therefore, according to the Roman Laws, it was Pilate's Duty to ſend him to his proper Sovereign, eſpecially as he was accuſed of Rebellion, and a Deſign to make himſelf a King.

The Words mean properly a ſplendid Robe, and do not relate ſo much to the Colour, as the Richneſs of the Habit.

It is generally thought, that the Cauſe of the Difference between Herod and Pilate, was the Maſſacre that Pilate made of ſome Galileans, at Jeruſalem, in the Time of the Paſſover, Luke xiii. 1. which Herod reſented, as an Indignity put upon him, and an Invaſion of his Authority, who was at that Time Tetrarch of Galilee.

The Chaſtiſement (which Pilate adviſed by Scourging) was not in order to his Crucifixion, and therefore was not that Puniſhment, which the Romans uſed to inflict upon Malefactors, as preparative to their Execution, for Pilate intended it as a Means to procure his Releaſe; and therefore he ſeemed willing to conſent to it as a Puniſhment, which the Jews ſo commonly inflicted upon thoſe, who had acted

acted perverſly againſt their Law, and their Traditions, that he might exempt him from that Sentence, which they were ſo urgent with him to pronounce. But the Reſult of this his Compliance was, that he neither ſaved our Lord, nor preſerved Juſtice. Inſtead of one Puniſhment, the Innocent was made to ſuffer two, being at laſt both ſcourged, and crucified.

As the Feaſt of the Paſſover was celebrated by the Jews, in Memory of their Deliverance from Egyptian Bondage, it was very agreeable to the Nature of that Feaſt, and therefore cuſtomary at that Time (tho' practiſed on no other Feſtivals) to make this Releaſe. It is obſerved however, that this Practice was no Cuſtom of the Jews, even when they had the Civil Adminiſtration in their Hands, but a Piece of Popularity, or Favour of the Procurator, firſt brought in by Pilate, and afterwards continued by ſome Chriſtian Emperors, who, by a general Law, commanded the Judges, that, on the firſt Day of the Paſſover, all Jewiſh Priſoners, but ſuch as were committed for particular Crimes, ſhould be diſcharged.

From the Time of Tiberius, the Governors of Provinces were allowed to take their Wives along with them, which was a Privilege not granted them before. This Wife of Pilate's, according to the general Tradition, was named Claudia Proſcula; and, in Relation to her Dream, ſome are of Opinion, that, as ſhe had Intelligence of our Lord's Apprehenſion, and knew, by his Character, that he was a righteous Perſon, her Imagination, being ſtruck with theſe Ideas, did naturally produce the Dream we read of. But, as our Saviour was apprehended about Midnight, out of the City, and without Pilate's Privity, and detained in the Houſe of Annas, until it was Day, there was no Poſſibility for her having any Notice of it; therefore we have the juſter Reaſon to believe, that this Dream was ſent providentially unto her, for the clearer Manifeſtation of our Lord's Innocence.

When the Jews perceived that Pilate looked upon the Accuſations, which they brought againſt Jeſus, of his being a ſeditious Perſon, and one who aimed at a Kingdom, as idle Suggeſtions, and which had no Shadow of Probability in them, they had Recourſe to another Allegation, viz. his being a Violater of the Laws of their Nations, and guilty of Blaſphemy; which (as they were allowed to be governed by their own Law) they had a Right to demand of their Governor to ſee puniſhed, and, accordingly, did with Arrogance enough.

Pilate indeed ſinned heinouſly, in abuſing his Power, to the Condemnation of the Innocent; but Judas ſinned more, in delivering him up to the Chief-Prieſts, and the Chief-prieſts in delivering him up to Pilate, than Pilate himſelf, whom they made a Tool to ſerve their Malice and Revenge. They had better Means of Knowledge than he, and ſo ſinned againſt more Light, and conſequently their Guilt was greater, and their Condemnation heavier than his.

The

The Word Gabatha in the Syriac (for that is the Language which was then commonly ſpoken, and which the Writers of the New Teſtament do therefore call the Hebrew) ſignifies an Elevation; and therefore the Place, where Pilate had his Tribunal erected, was probably a Terraſs, a Gallery, or Balcony belonging to his Palace, and paved with Stone or Marble, as the Greek Word Lithoſtrotos imports.

Waſhing of Hands, with a Deſign to denote Innocency, was not peculiar only to the Jews, but cuſtomary among other Nations; becauſe by the Element of Water it is natural to ſignify Purity and Cleanneſs; but then the Queſtion is, Whether in Conformity to the Jews or Gentiles, it was, that Pilate made uſe of this Ceremony? To expiate an unknown Murder, the Elders of the next adjacent City were wont to waſh their Hands, and ſay, "Our Hands have not ſhed this Blood," Deut. xxi. 6, 7. and the Pſalmiſt, having renounced all Confederacy with wicked and miſchievous Men, makes this Reſolution, "I will waſh my Hands, in Teſtimony of my Innocency, Pſ. xxvi. 6. From which Paſſages Origen is of Opinion, that Pilate did this in Compliance with the Manners of the Jews; and by Actions, as well as Words, he might declare to them the Opinion he had of our Lord's Innocence. But, as Pilate was a Roman, others are rather inclined to think, that in this Action, he conformed himſelf to the Manners of the Gentiles. The Scholiaſt upon Sophocles (in Ajace) informs us, that it was the Cuſtom among the Ancients, when they had killed a Man, or ſhed Blood, to waſh their Hands in Water, thereby to purify them from their Defilements. Nay, Clemens Romanus, informs us, (l. ii. c. 52.) that when Judges were going to pronounce Sentence of Death, they uſually lifted up their Hands to Heaven, thereby to denote their own Innocency; and it is not improbable, that they waſhed their Hands before they did ſo, that they might lift them up with the more purity.

But, to proceed. Barabbas being thus releaſed, and Jeſus condemned to the Croſs, the Soldiers and Officers, after they had acted over again their former Inſults, and Indignities, took off the purple Coat, and put his own Garment on him, and having laid an heavy Croſs upon his Shoulders, led him away to his Crucifixion: But when they came to the Gate of the City, his Strength was ſo intirely exhauſted, that he was not able to ſtand under it any longer, and therefore they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, the Father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear it the reſt of the Way.

Among the vaſt Throngs, that followed to this Execution, there were many People (eſpecially ſome pious Women) who could not behold this ſad Spectacle, without the higheſt Grief and Lamentation; which when our Saviour obſerved, lifting up his Face, all bloody and disfigured, "Weep not for me, ſaid he, but weep for yourſelves, and your Children; for it will not be long, before thoſe ſhall be accounted happy, who ſhall have no Poſterity to inherit the Miſeries, that ſhall then

then come upon this Nation: For how diſmal muſt their Condition be who ſhall call on the Hills to cover them, and the Mountains to fall on them, that, by a ſudden Deſtruction they may eſcape the lingering Calamities of Famine, and Fear, and the Horror of a thouſand Deaths!"

When he came to the Place of Execution, which was called Golgotha, or Mount Calvary, the Soldiers, before they nailed him to the Croſs, offered him a Potion of Wine mixed with Gall, which when he had taſted it, he refuſed to drink. They then ſtripped off his Cloaths; and having, with four great Nails faſtened his Hands and Feet, with his Body ſtretched out, to the Croſs; they ſo raiſed it up, and fixed it to the Ground. To obſcure his Innocence, and put him to the greater Shame, they crucified him between two common Malefactors; but what might be ſome Compenſation for that, was the Inſcription which Pilate ordered to be fixed on the Top of his Croſs, "Jeſus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," in the three moſt general Languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, which the High-prieſts would gladly have had him alter: But, either out of Spite to them, who had forced him upon an unjuſt Act, or out of Honour to our Lord, whom he knew to be a righteous Perſon, he poſitively refuſed to do it.

As ſoon as our Lord was fixed on the Croſs (which was much about Noon) the four Soldiers, who were his Executioners, went to dividing the poor Spoil of his Garments. His Mantle they cut into four Parts, and took each of them one; but as for his Coat, becauſe it was one intire Piece, woven without Seam, and would therefore be ſpoiled if it where divided, for it they caſt Lots, and therein fulfilled a famous Prophecy.

While he thus hung upon the Croſs in the moſt exquiſite Torments, ſeveral People of different Denominations, the Chief-prieſts, Rulers, and Soldiers, moſt of the Multitude, and almoſt every common Paſſenger, inſulted his Miſery; preſuming, that a Perſon, reduced to that low Eſtate, could never be the promiſed Meſſiah: But all the Reply that he made to their bitter and reviling Speeches, was only by way of Petition to his heavenly Father, that, in reſpect of their Ignorance, and confirmed Prejudice againſt him, he would be pleaſed to overlook their barbarous Treatment of him, and to pardon their provoking Blaſphemies.

Nay, of the two Malefactors who were crucified with him, one of them reviled and mocked him in the ſame groſs Manner, requiring him to give the Company (as they deſired) a Demonſtration of his being the true Meſſiah, by reſcuing both himſelf and them from the Croſſes whereon they were fixed: But the other Malefactor reproved his Companion for inſulting the Innocent, and while himſelf was receiving the juſt Reward of his Crimes, upbraiding a Perſon who ſuffered undeſervedly; and then looking upon Jeſus, with a noble Reliance, and moſt wonderful Faith, he intreated him to retain ſome Remembrance of him when

when he came into his Kingdom; to which our Lord returned him this moſt gracious Promiſe of ſpeedy Felicity, "To-Day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe."

In the mean Time, there ſtood by our Saviour's Croſs, ſad Spectators of this diſmal Tragedy, the holy Virgin Mother, Mary the Wife of Alphæus, Mary Magdalene, and John his beloved Apoſtle; to whoſe Care and Protection he recommended his ſorrowful Mother, and, from that Time forward, he took her to his Houſe, and paid her the Reſpect due to a Parent.

A few Obſervations may be here neceſſary to illuſtrate the foregoing Paſſages.

It was the Cuſtom, that he who was to be crucified ſhould bear his own Croſs to the Place of Execution: But, whereas it is generally ſuppoſed, that our Lord bore the whole Croſs, i. e. the long and tranſverſe Part both. This ſeems to be a Thing impoſſible; and therefore Lipſius, in his Treatiſe (de Supplicio Crucis) has ſet this Matter in a true Light, when he tells us, that Jeſus only carried the tranſverſe Beam, becauſe the long Piece of Timber, or Body of the Croſs, was either fixed in the Ground before, or made ready to be ſet up, as ſoon as the Priſoner came; and from hence he obſerved, that Painters are very much miſtaken in their Deſcription of our Saviour carrying the whole Croſs.

Crucifixion was a Death, the moſt dreadful of all others, both for the Shame, and the Pain of it. So ſcandalous, that it was inflicted, as the laſt Mark of Deteſtation, upon the vileſt of People. It was the Puniſhment of Robbers, and Murderers, provided that they were Slaves too; but otherwiſe, if they were free, and had the Privileges of the City of Rome, this was then thought a Proſtitution of that Honour, the too infamous a Puniſhment for ſuch an one, let his Crimes have been what they would. The Form of a Croſs was that of two Poſts, cutting one the other at right Angles. On that which ſtood upright, the Body was faſtened, by nailing the Feet to it, and on the other tranſverſe Piece, by nailing the Hands on each Side. Now becauſe theſe Parts of the Body, being the Inſtruments of Action and Motion, and provided by Nature with a much greater Quantity of Nerves than others have Occaſion for, and becauſe all Senſation is performed by the Spirits contained in their Nerves, it will follow, that wherever they abound, the Senſe of Pain, muſt needs, in Proportion, be more quick and tender. But though the Pain of this Kind of Death was exceedingly ſharp, yet, as none of the Vitals were immediately affected, the Body continued, thus ſtretched out, and hanging upon the Nails, that faſtened it to the Croſs, until Exceſs of Anguiſh had, by Degrees, quite exhauſted the Spirits, and driven out the Soul, which muſt needs make the Death, which our Saviour ſubmitted to for our Sakes, ſlow and lingering, as well as painful and ignominious: So lingering that St. Andrew was two whole Days upon the Croſs, and ſome other Martyrs have been rather ſtarved, and devoured by Birds,

Birds, than killed with the Torments of the Tree.

Lybia, in its proper Acceptation, denotes thoſe Parts of the African Continent, which lie about the Mediterranean Sea, from Egypt Eaſtward, to the greater Syrtis, or Gulph of Sidra, Weſtward. In the Weſtern Part of Lybia ſtood Cyrene, a City of great Note, and once of ſuch Power, as to contend with Carthage for Pre-eminence: But whether this Simon, whom the Soldiers compelled to carry our Saviour's Croſs, was a Jew or Pagan, is a Queſtion that has been diſputed among the Ancients. Several Fathers have thought that he was a Gentile, and that herein he was a Type of that idolatrous People, who were afterwards to be called to the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, and to carry the Croſs after Chriſt. But others, from his Name, rather imagine that he was a Jew, and that, as there were great Numbers of that Nation in Egypt, and the neighbouring Countries, this Simon might be one, whoſe Habitation was at Cyrene in Lybia, but was now come up to Jeruſalem, at the Time of the Paſſover. He is called by St. Mark, ch. xv. 21. the Father of Alexander and Rufus, becauſe theſe two Perſons were become famous in the Chriſtian Church, at the Time when this Apoſtle wrote his Goſpel; but whether he himſelf was, at this Time, a Diſciple of Chriſt, and afterwards Biſhop of Boſtra in Arabia, where he ſuffered Martyrdom, by being burnt alive by the Pagans, is much to be queſtioned, tho' ſome have aſſerted it; but not, I fear, from ſufficient Authority.

The Saying of our Saviour to the Women, who lamented him as he went to Crucifixion, "Weep not for me, but for yourſelves, and your Children," they undoubtedly had Occaſion to think of at the Siege of Jeruſalem, and during the War againſt the Romans, not only on Account of the Loſs of their Children, and the Sale of them who were under ſeventeen for Bondſlaves; but chi fly on the Account of that Famine in Jeruſalem, which forced Mary, the Daughter of Eleazar, a Woman of ſome Figure and Quality, to eat her own ſucking Child: Upon which (ſays Joſephus) "the Dread of Famine made Men weary of their Lives, and the Living envied the Dead that were taken away before the Extremity came to this Height."

That the Words, "they ſhall call on the Hills to cover them, and the Mountains to fall on them," is a proverbial Expreſſion, which the Prophet Hoſea, ch. x. 8. makes uſe of, to denote the utter Deſpair of a People, when they ſee unavoidable Calamities coming on them, cannot be doubted; for ſo the Targum upon Hoſea explains it; "He will bring ſuch Judgments upon them, as will render their Condition as miſerable, as if the Mountains ſhould cover them, and the Hills fall upon them." Iſaiah ſpeaks of the Wicked, "that they ſhall go into the Holes of the Rocks, and into the Caves of the Earth for fear of the Lord," ch. ii. 19. And, accordingly, Joſephus relates of

the Jews, that, after the Taking of Jeruſalem, many of them hid themſelves in Vaults, and Sepulchres, and there periſhed, rather than ſurrender to the Romans.

Golgotha in the Syriac (vulgarly called the Hebrew Tongue) ſignifies the ſame that Calvary does in Latin, and was ſo called, either becauſe the Form of the Mount did ſomewhat reſemble a Man's Skull, or rather, becauſe it being the common Place of Execution, a great Number of dead Mens Skulls were uſually ſeen there. It is a ſmall Eminency, or Hill upon the greater Mount of Moriah; and as it was anciently appropriated to the Execution of Malefactors, it was therefore ſhut out of the Walls of the City, as an execrable and polluted Place; but, ſince it was made the Altar, on which was offered up the precious and all-ſufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World, it has recovered itſelf from that Infamy; and has always been reverenced, and reſorted to, by Chriſtians, and with ſuch Devotion, as has drawn the City round about it, ſo that it now ſtands in the midſt of Jeruſalem, and a great Part of the Hill of Sion is ſhut out of the Walls, to make Room for the Admiſſion of Mount Calvary; and this the rather, becauſe it was a Tradition received by the primitive Chriſtians, that the firſt, as well as the ſecond Adam, was buried here; and that this was the Place where Abraham was about to have offered his Son Iſaac, the Type of our Bleſſed Lord.

Interpreters, and others, vary very much about the Paſſage concerning the offering our Lord Wine mixed with Gall, taking it two different Ways, as St. Matthew, ch. xxvii. 34. and St. Mark, ch. xv. 23. ſeem to expreſs it. Some will have it, that, in St. Matthew's Senſe, Vinegar mingled with Gall, was a bitter, poiſonous Draught, to ſtupify the Perſon who drank it, that, by benumming his Senſes he might feel leſs Pain. Thoſe that differ from this, ſay, that by the Piety of ſome of his Diſciples, and not improbably of ſome of thoſe good Women who uſed to miniſter to Jeſus, there was prepared Wine mingled with Myrrh, which according to Pliny, among the Levantines, was an excellent and pleaſant Mixture, and ſuch as the Piety and Indulgence of theſe Nations uſed to adminiſter to condemned Perſons, to fortify their drooping Spirits againſt the Terrors of approaching Death. But ſtill there is a Difference between the two Evangeliſts, ſince the former affirms, that the Potion offered to our Saviour was Vinegar mingled with Gall, the latter, Wine mingled with Myrrh; and to reconcile this, the eaſieſt Way is to ſay (with our learned Dr. Lightfoot) that there were two Cups offered to our Lord at the Time of his Paſſion, one of Wine mixed with Myrrh, by ſome of his Friends, before he was nailed to the Croſs; and the other of Vinegar, by the Soldiers, in a ſcoffing and inſulting Manner, after he was nailed to the Croſs; which is better than to ſay, with ſome great Men, that the ancient

ancient Tranſlator of St. Matthew from the Hebrew or Syriac, miſtaking the Word Marra, which properly ſignifies Bitterneſs, might put Gall (which in Syriac is Marar, and derived from the ſame Root) inſtead of Myrrh.

The Malefactors here mentioned, were probably ſome of thoſe factious and ſeditious Gangs, which Judæa at this Time was full of. Under Pretence of public Liberty, they committed all Manner of Violence and Outrage; and, ſtirring up the People againſt the Roman Government, drew upon the Nation all the Calamity which afterwards befel it. As it was cuſtomary to crucify ſeveral Malefactors at the ſame Time, eſpecially if convicted of the ſame Crimes, our Saviour, who was accuſed by the Jews of ſeditious Practices, had two, who were really guilty of that Crime, executed with him, and they placed him in the midſt, as in the moſt honourable Place, purely in Deriſion, and with the ſame malevolent Spirit, that made them array him in a purple Robe, a Sceptre, and a Crown.

The Inſcription which Pilate ordered to be fixed on the Top of our Saviour's Croſs, was in the three moſt general Languages; in Hebrew or the Syriac, which was then the common Language of the Country; in Greek, which was the Language of Commerce almoſt all the Eaſt over; and the Latin, becauſe of the Majeſty of the Roman Empire, which, at that Time, had extended its Dominion over the then known World. The whole Inſcription, however, is ſaid to have been written after the Jewiſh Manner, i. e. from the right Hand to the left, that it might be more legible to the Jews, though, by converſing with the Romans, they began now to underſtand a little Latin.

Some of the Fathers are of Opinion, that our Saviour's Coat, for which the four Soldiers caſt Lots, was made of two Pieces of Woollen Stuff, woven in a Loom, and ſo fine-drawn, that the Joining could not be perceived. Others will have it, that it was all Needle-work, i. e. knit, not woven from the Top to the Bottom: But Braunius, in his Treatiſe "de Veſtitu ſacerdotum Hebræorum," has plainly proved, that the Ancients had the Art of weaving any Habit, of what Make or Size ſoever, all of one Piece in a Loom; that, in ſeveral Eaſtern Countries the Art is ſtill preſerved, and practiſed; and that himſelf made a Machine (which Calmet, in his Dictionary under the Word Veſtments, has given us) wherein ſuch an Habit might be wrought. As it was cuſtomary formerly for Women to weave Stuffs and Cloth, not for their own Wearing only, but for their Huſbands and Children's Uſe (for ſo the Character of the virtuous Woman in Solomon, Prov. xxxi. 13. and the Practice of Penelope, the Wife of Ulyſſes, ſhew) it was an ancient Tradition, that the bleſſed Virgin herſelf wove her Son's Coat; but, that ſhe made it for him when he was young; that it grew with him as he increaſed in Stature; and continued always freſh, without Decay, is a mere Fiction, in order to aſſimulate it to the Habits which the Iſraelites wore in the Wilderneſs: Nor can it be eaſily credited, that the holy

Coat, which is kept at the Cathedral Church at Treves, is the very ſame that our Saviour had on before his Crucifixion.

If we compare Matth. xxvii. 44. (where it is ſaid, "that the Thieves, who were crucified with Jeſus, caſt the ſame in his Teeth") with what we read in Luke xxiii. 29. (where 'tis ſaid, "one of the Malefactors, that was hanged, reviled on him") we may be apt to fancy ſome Contradiction in the Evangeliſts: But this the Commentators reconcile, by ſhewing that it was a very common Thing in the Hebrew Stile, to uſe the plural Number inſtead of the ſingular: As when it is ſaid, that the Ark reſted on the Mountains of Ararat, Gen. viii. 4. i. e. on one of the Mountains, and that God overthrew the Cities where Lot dwelt, Gen. xix. 29. when he could only dwell in one at a Time; with ſeveral other Examples, both in the Old and New Teſtament. But I ſee no Reaſon why we may not underſtand this Paſſage as St. Chryſoſtom and St. Jerom have done, viz. "That both the Thieves did, at firſt, rail on Jeſus, probably thinking, by that Artifice, to obtain ſome Help towards procuring their Pardon; but being diſappointed of their Hopes, and hearing Jeſus pray for his Crucifiers, one of them was thereby prevailed upon and converted: Eſpecially ſince according to this Interpretation, the Operation of God's Grace upon this Man's Mind, was more ſudden and ſtrong, and his Converſion more miraculous.

The Thief is called by ſome Authors Dimas, or Diſmas; and out of a falſe Goſpel of Nicodemus, they produce many Fables concerning him, but too abſurd to be here related. Several of the Fathers, however, give him the Title of a Martyr, becauſe of the Teſtimony which he bore to Chriſt, even when he ſeemed to be utterly deſerted by every one elſe.

The Word Paradiſe comes from the Hebrew, or rather from the Chaldee, Pardes; and, according to the Force of the Original, it ſhould properly ſignify an Orchard, or Plantation of Fruit-trees, as in ſome Paſſages of the Old Teſtament, particularly in Nehem. ii. 8. it denotes a Foreſt. The Septuagint made uſe of the Word Paradiſos, when they ſpoke of the Garden of Eden, which the Lord planted in the Beginning of the World, and therein placed our firſt Parents. The Jews commonly called Paradiſe, the Garden of Eden, and they imagine that at the coming of the Meſſiah, they ſhall there enjoy an earthly Felicity in the midſt of all Sorts of Delights, and till the Reſurrection, and the Coming of the Meſſiah, they think their Souls ſhall abide here in a State of Reſt. In the Books of the New Teſtament, the Word Paradiſe is put for a Place of Delight, where the Souls of the Bleſſed enjoy everlaſting Happineſs; but where our Lord promiſes the penitent Thief, that he ſhould be with him in Paradiſe, it is thought by the Generality of the Fathers, that he means Heaven itſelf; though modern Commentators make no more of it, than that State of Felicity, which God has appointed for the Reception

Reception of the Pious, until the Time of the general Reſurrection. Whether the Place of the departed Souls is above, within, or beneath the higheſt Heavens; whether there is one common Receptacle for the Souls of the Righteous and Unrighteous till the Reſurrection; or whether, from their Departure out of Bodies, they dwell in ſeparate Manſions (as is more probable) are Speculations we are no ways concerned to be inquiſitive about; whilſt we are ſatisfied of this mean Truth, that the Righteous are in the intermediate Time, between their Death and Reſurrection, in a State of Happineſs, and the Wicked in a State of Miſery. For, as far as our Apprehenſions of theſe Matters go, a material Place can no ways contribute, either to increaſe or diminiſh the Happineſs or Miſery of an immaterial Spirit. Spirits that are diveſted of Fleſh and Blood, wherever they are, carry Heaven or Hell along with them. The good Angels are as happy here upon Earth, whilſt they are employed in the Execution of God's Will, as whilſt they are converſant in the Regions above, becauſe "they do always behold the Face of God, in whoſe Preſence is Fulneſs of Joy," and Satan was no more happy, when "he came among the Sons of God to preſent themſelves before the Lord," Job i. 6. than he was when he was going to and fro in the Earth. The Happineſs and Miſery of pure Spirits hath no Relation, that we know of, to the Place where they are; but the Happineſs and Miſery of pure embodied Spirits, or of Men who are made up of Souls and Bodies, have a Dependance upon the Place of their Abode; and therefore we are ſure, that wherever ſeparate Souls are lodged till the Reſurrection, after the Reſurrection, righteous and wicked Men ſhall have Places allotted to them, ſuitable to their different States; the former ſhall be carried up to the higheſt Heavens, and the latter ſhall be thrown down to the nethermoſt Hell.

That Alpheus and Cleophas were one and the ſame Perſon, is plain from hence,—That James, who is called the Son of Mary, the Wife of Cleophas, is the ſame with James the Son of Alphæus; as indeed, in the Hebrew Tongue, Alphæus and Cleophas differ only in the Manner in which the Greeks have written, or pronounced theſe two Names. It is thought that ſhe was the Siſter of the Holy Virgin, and the Mother of James the Leſs, of Joſes, of Simon, and of Judas, who in the Goſpel are called the Brethren of our Lord, i. e. his Couſin-germans. When or where ſhe died, is a Matter of much Uncertainty: But the Greeks kept the eighth of April in Memory of the holy Woman, who brought Perfumes to embalm the Body of Chriſt, and pretend, at this Time, to have her Body at Conſtantinople, in the Church of the Holy Virgin, built by Juſtin II. though others talk of the Tranſlation of her Body, in particular, into the City of Veroli, near Rome; while others again pretend, that it is in a little City of Provence, called the three Marys, on the Banks of the Rhone, and

and of the Sea. All Fictions equally credible!

The Generality of Commentators do infer from our Lord's recommending his Mother to his beloved Diſciple, that her Huſband Joſeph was at that Time dead; and therefore our Lord took Care that ſhe ſhould not be deſtitute, charging his beloved Diſciple to treat her as his Mother; and he accordingly not only received her into his Houſe, while he continued in Paleſtine, but, when he remov'd to Epheſus, took her along with him, where (according to the Account of the Fathers of the Council held there) ſhe is ſaid to have died, and been buried at a very old Age. Others, however, maintain, that ſhe died and was buried at Jeruſalem; and they farther add, that the Apoſtles being diſperſed in different Parts of the World to labour in the Preaching of the Goſpel, all on a ſudden, were miraculouſly tranſported to Jeruſalem, that they might be preſent at the Deceaſe of the bleſſed Virgin; that after her Death, they buried her in the Valley of Gethſamene, where, for three whole Days, were heard Concerts of heavenly Singers; and that at the End of three Days, when the Concert ceaſed, and St. Thomas, who had not been preſent at the Burial, was deſirous to ſee her Corpſe, they opened the Tomb again; but not finding the Body there, they thence concluded, that God had been pleaſed to honour it with Immortality; by a Reſurrection previous to that of other Men. But theſe are Traditions that deſerve no Regard at all.

But to return to our Hiſtory.

During theſe melancholly Tranſactions, the whole Frame of Nature began to be changed: The Sun withdrew its Light; the Stars appeared; and the Eclipſe was the more remarkable, becauſe the Moon, at that Time, was not in Conjunction. This Eclipſe began about twelve, and laſted till three in the Afternoon; when all Things were full of Horror and Amazement. Men's Hearts began to relent, and inſtead of their former Inſults, they ſtood in ſilent Expectance of what would be the Iſſue. All this while our Bleſſed Lord continued meek and ſilent, tho' languiſhing and waſting under the Agonies which his Body endured, and the heavy Load of the divine Indignation againſt Sin; till, in the Words of the Pſalmiſt, he complained at laſt, " Eli! Eli! Lamaſabacthani, i. e. My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?

One of the Soldiers hearing the Word Eli or Elohi, out of Ignorance of the Hebrew Tongue, thought that he called for Elias to help him in his Diſtreſs; and thereupon dipping a Spunge in Vinegar, put it on a Reed, which St. John calls a Stalk of Hyſſop, and (as he complained of being thirſty) gave it him to drink. Others, however, were for letting it alone, to ſee whether Elias would come and help him, but when he had taſted the Vinegar, and now knew that all the Types and Prophecies concerning him were fulfilled, his Father's Wrath appeaſed, and the great Work of Man's Redemption accompliſhed, he ſaid, It is finiſhed, and then,

then, bowing down his Head, he recommended his Soul into his Father's Hands, and ſo gave up the Ghoſt.

Upon his Expiration there immediately happened a terrible Earthquake, which rent the Vail of the Temple from Top to Bottom, and ſplit the Rocks, and opened the Graves and Tombs, ſo that the Bodies of ſeveral who were dead, aroſe and went into Jeruſalem, where they were ſeen and known by many. Theſe Prodigies which attended our Lord's Death, ſtruck the Spectator's with ſuch Amazement, that, as they returned home, they ſmote their Breaſts, and with great Lamentation, declared that the Perſon who had ſuffered that Day, was innocent. Nay the very Centurion, and other Soldiers, who attended the Execution, from the Conviction of what they had ſeen, were not afraid to affirm, that he certainly was the Son of God.

The Day whereon our Saviour ſuffered, was the Eve, or Preparative to the Paſchal Feſtival, which, that Year, was on the Jewiſh Sabbath-Day, and ſo was a Feaſt and Sabbath together. That therefore ſo great and ſolemn a Day might not be profaned by the Suſpenſion of the Bodies on the Croſs, the Rulers of the Jews came, and requeſted of Pilate, that their Legs might be broken to haſten their Deaths, and their Bodies taken down; which accordingly was executed upon the two Thieves: But when the Soldiers came to Jeſus, and found him already dead, inſtead of breaking his Legs, one of them pierced his Side with a Spear, from which iſſued out a great Quantity of Blood and Water.

Among the Diſciples of our Lord, there was one named Joſeph, a Man of great Wealth and Honour, born at Arimathæa, and, not improbably, one of the Council of the grand Sanhedrim, but who ſtood in ſome Fear of them, while our Saviour was alive. After his Death, however, he took Courage, and going to Pilate, begged Leave of him to take down the Body of Jeſus, and bury it. The Governor was ſurprized to hear that he was dead ſo ſoon; but being informed by the Centurion, that it actually was ſo, he ordered the Body to be delivered to Joſeph, who, for the preſent, wrapped it up in fine Linen Cloths, which he had provided for that Purpoſe; and, at the ſame Time, Nicodemus (another private Diſciple of our Lord's) brought a Mixture of Myrrh and Aloes, with other Spices and Perfumes, to embalm his Body, according to the Manner of the Jews.

Again let us review the foregoing Paſſages,

"Eli! Eli! Lamaſabacthani; My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me? Theſe Words are taken from the twenty-ſecond Pſalm, which is allowed, by all Commentators, to relate to the Meſſiah; for which Reaſon our Saviour made uſe of them, rather than any other, to evidence his Title to that Character. Now, in the Hebrew way of ſpeaking, 'tis certain that God is ſaid to leave or forſake any Perſon, when he ſuffers him to fall into great Calamities, and lie under great Misfortunes, and does not help him out of them. To this Purpoſe

Purpoſe Zion, having been long afflicted, is brought in by the Prophet, complaining, "the Lord hath forſaken me, the Lord hath forgotten me," Chap. xlix. 14. And as the royal Pſalmiſt is very frequent in ſuch Complaints, ſo he explains the Senſe of them, when he addreſſes himſelf to God, "Why art thou ſo far from my Prayer, ſo that, tho' I cry in the Day-time, thou hear-eſt not?" Pſal. xxii. 1, 2. That David was not fallen into any Deſpondency, is manifeſt from his calling unto God, ſo fiduciarly his God; and that our Bleſſed Saviour was not (as ſome think) under any Failure of his Truſt in God, or any Perturbation of Spirit from the Senſe of divine Wrath, is evident from his ſaying of his ſuffering Condition, it is finiſhed, and from the very Words, wherein he breathed his laſt, "Father, into thy Hands I commit my Spirit."

The Vinegar and Spunge, in Executions of condemned Perſons, were ſet ready to ſtop the too violent Flux of Blood, that the Malefactor might be the longer in dying, but to the bleſſed Jeſus they were exhibited with Scorn; for being mingled with Gall, the Mixture was more horrid and unpleaſant.

It may be pretended, perhaps, that a Branch of Hyſſop, might not be long enough to reach our Saviour's Mouth, as he was hanging upon the Croſs; but, beſides that, Croſſes were not, in ſome Places erected ſo high, but that Beaſts of Prey could reach the Bodies that were faſtened to them; and Hyſſop, in thoſe Countries, as well as Muſtard-Seed, was of a much longer Growth than it is with us; I cannot ſee why the Perſon, that offered our Saviour this Vinegar, might not make uſe of a Ladder, if the Croſs was ſo high that he could not fairly reach him: Nor is the Difference in St. Matthew's calling it a Reed, which St. John calls Hyſſop, of any Manner of Moment; becauſe the Greek Word is put to ſignify a Stalk, Shoot, or Branch; ſo that St. Matthew ſpeaks of that in general, which St. John ſpecifies in particular.

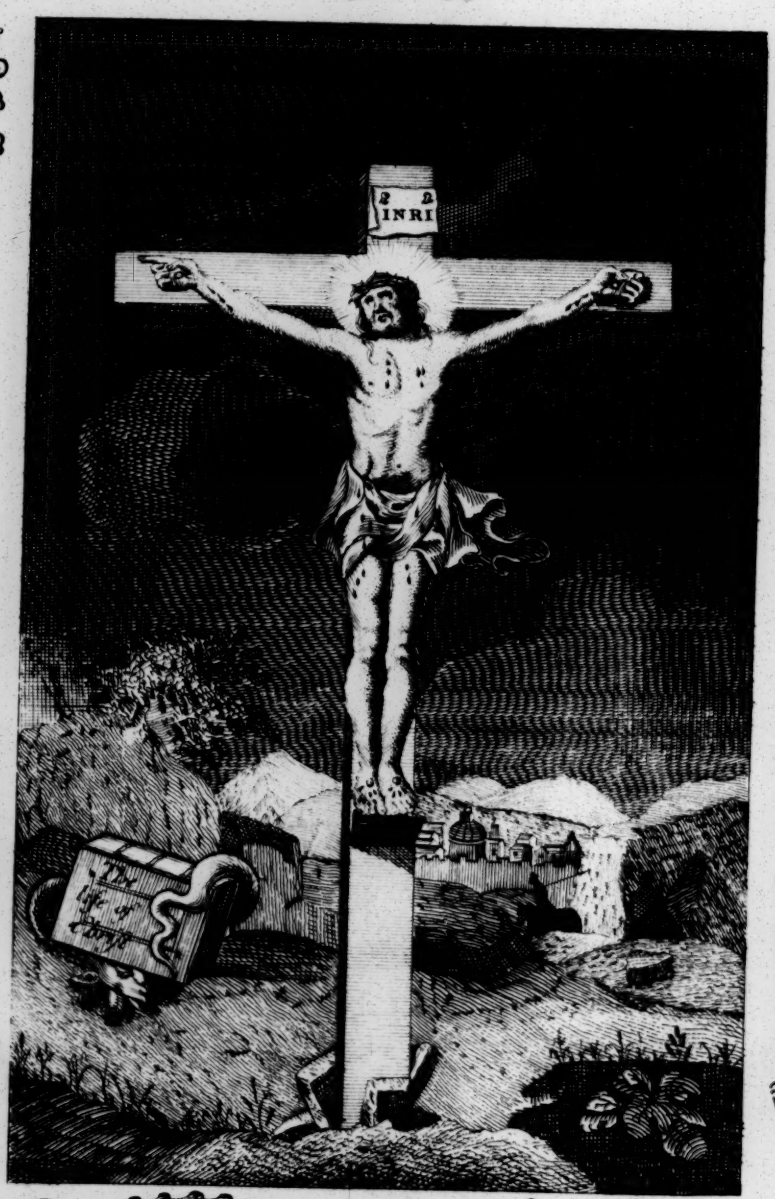
There was a Tradition among the Jews, that it was Elias's proper Office to come and ſuccour ſuch as were in Miſery: And, accordingly, ſome of the Jews, either deceived with the Reſemblance of the Words, thought that our Lord called Elias to his Help; or elſe giving a malicious Turn to the Senſe of the Words, which they well enough underſtood, they inſulted him, for his calling in vain Elias to his Help.

The original Phraſe may denote a delivering up, or (as our Saviour expreſſes it, Luke xxiii. 46.) a "committing his Spirit into the Hands of God," as a ſacred Truſt to be reſtored again, and united to his Body, at the Time prefixed by his own infinite Wiſdom; and plainly implies ſuch a Diſſolution, and actual Separation of Soul and Body, as every common Man undergoes, when he dies: But herein is a remarkable Difference, that what is in other Men the Effect of Neceſſity, was in Jeſus a voluntary Act, and the Effect of his own free Choice. Hence the Generality of Interpreters have thought, that St. John takes Notice

that



THE CRUCIFIXION



that Chriſt bowed his Head, before he gave up the Ghoſt; whereas, in common Caſes, the falling of the Head follows after the Breath's going out of the Body: And hence alſo St. Mark obſerves, that Jeſus's crying out with ſo loud and ſtrong a Voice, immediately before his expiring, was one Reaſon that moved the Centurion to think him an extraordinary Perſon; for this ſhewed that it was not the Exceſs of Pain and Sorrow, that had tired out Nature and haſtened his Death, but that he, who (as himſelf profeſſes, John x. 18.) had Power to lay down his Life, and could not have it taken from him, without his own Permiſſion and Conſent, did freely and voluntarily lay it down, at ſuch a Time, as himſelf ſaw convenient.

Some are of Opinion, that the Earthquake at the Death of our Saviour, was the ſame that happened in the Reign of Tiberius Cæſar, and was the greateſt that ever was known in the Memory of Man. Both Pliny and Macrobius make mention of it; and the latter informs us, that it deſtroyed no leſs than twelve Cities in Aſia: But, by the ſacred Text it appears, that the Earthquake here mentioned, affected only the Temple of Jeruſalem, and the Parts which are ſpecified, the Vail, the Ground, the Rocks, the Tombs, &c. Nor does it ſeem improbable, that this Prodigy was ſhewn particularly in that Place, to foretel the Deſtruction of the Temple and its Service, upon the People's ſad Impiety in crucifying the Lord of Life.

In the ſecond Temple, between the Holy Place, and the Moſt Holy (ſays Maimonides) there was no Partition-wall, though in the firſt Temple there was one, built of the Thickneſs of a Cubit. The Diviſion between was made by two Vails, one from the Extremity of the Holy Place, and the other from the Extremity of the Moſt Holy, with a void Space of a Cubit between. The like Form of Separation was obſerved in the Temple which Herod rebuilt, as Joſephus informs us; and therefore it muſt be a Miſtake in thoſe, who think that this Vail was a Partition-wall of Stones. Whether of the two Vails, that which belonged to the Holy Place, or that which hung in the Moſt Holy, was at this Time rent in twain, is a Queſtion among the Ancients, tho' the Words of the Author to the Hebrews, where he tells us, that Chriſt, as our High-prieſt, "has conſecrated for us a new Way through the Vail, ſo that we may with Boldneſs enter into the holieſt by the Blood of Jeſus," Heb. x. 19, &c. ſeems to be a pretty clear Determination of it.

In the Church of the Sepulchre (which ſtands on Mount Cavalry) is ſtill to be ſeen that memorable Cleft of the Rock, occaſioned, as it is ſaid, by the Earthquake which happened at our Lord's Crucifixion. This Cleft (as to what now appears of it) is about a Span wide at its upper Part, and two deep. After this it cloſes: But then it opens again below, and runs down to an unknown Depth of Earth. That this Rent was made by the Earthquake, which happened at

our Lord's Paſſion, there is only Tradition to prove: But that it is a natural and genuine Breach, and not counterfeited by any Art, the Senſe and Reaſon of every one, that ſees it, may convince him; for the Sides of it fit like two Tallies to each other, and yet it runs in ſuch intricate Windings, as could not be well counterfeited by Art, or performed by any Inſtrument.

Since St. Paul ſtiles our Saviour the Firſt-Born from the Dead, Col. i. 18. and the Fruits of them that ſlept, 1 Cor. xv. 20. moſt Commentators are of Opinion, though ſeveral Tombs were opened, as ſoon as our Saviour expired, yet none of the Saints aroſe, until he returned from the Grave: But then who the Saints were, it is no eaſy Matter to conjecture. Some think, that the Man after God's own Heart, King David, or ſome of the ancient Patriarchs, might beſt deſerve this Pre-eminence: But on the Day of Pentecoſt, St. Peter tells the Jews plainly, that the Body of David was ſtill in its Sepulchre, and not aſcended into Heaven, Acts ii. 29, 34. and St. Paul, in his Epiſtle to the Hebrews, tells us of the Patriarchs, that, "they had not received the Promiſe, God having deſigned, that they, without us, ſhould not be made perfect," Heb. xi. 39, 40. The moſt probable Conjecture therefore is, that they were ſome of thoſe who believed in Jeſus (as old Simeon did) and died a little after his Crucifixion; becauſe of theſe it is ſaid, that they went into the holy City and appeared to many, and ſo, very probably were well known to thoſe, to whom they appeared, as having been their Cotemporaries.

The Centurion who attended at Chriſt's Crucifixion, according to ſome, was named Longinus, and the Tradition is,—That, upon his Converſion to the Chriſtian Faith, being expelled from the Roman Army wherein he ſerved, he returned to Cappadocia, where he began to preach Jeſus Chriſt, but was there beheaded, and his Head carried to Pilate. But all this ſeems to be a Fable, for which there is no Foundation in Hiſtory.

That the Son of God did not always ſignify one, who was ſo by an eternal Generation, but only one that was his beloved and adopted Son, is apparent from hence, that what is here called the Son of God, is, in St. Luke xxiii. 47. ſaid to be a juſt Man. For though the Jews very well knew, from the ſecond Pſalm, that their Meſſiah was to be the Son of God; yet that they did not know him to be ſo, in the higher Senſe of the Word, ſeems to be evident, becauſe they did not know how David could call him Lord, Matt. xvii. 16.

The Jews had a ſtrict Injunction in their Law, that the dead Bodies of thoſe, who were executed, ſhould not hang all Night, but by all Means be buried that Day, Deut. xxi. 22, 23. but the Romans uſed to do otherwiſe. They ſuffered the Bodies to hang upon the Croſs always until they were dead; and in ſome Caſes, a conſiderable Time longer. On this Occaſion it ſeems, as if the Jews had left the Romans to follow their own Cuſtom, in Relation

to

to the crucified Perſons, and were in no Concern to have them taken down, had it not been for the near Approach of their Paſſover, whoſe Joy and Feſtivity, they thought might be damped by ſo melancholy a Sight. Upon this Account they petition Pilate to have them removed: And the Reaſon why Pilate might be rather induced to grant their Requeſt, was, that the Romans themſelves had ſuch Reſpect for the Feaſts of their Emperors, that on thoſe Days they always took down the Bodies from the Croſs, and gave them to their Relations.

The Prophecy, which foretold, that a Bone of him ſhould not be broken, is uſually referred to the Command concerning the Paſchal Lamb, "Thou ſhalt not break a Bone of it," Ex. xii. 46. But, as David was likewiſe a Type of Chriſt, we cannot ſee, why it may not refer to theſe Words of his, "He keepeth all his Bones, ſo that none of them is broken," Pſ. xxxiv. 19. or why the Promiſe, which reſpects all righteous Perſons, might not more particularly be fulfilled in the juſt one.

The Man who pierced his Side with a Spear, was not one of the Horſe (as uſually is painted) but of the Foot Soldiers; becauſe a Spear, or ſhort Pike, was not Part of the Armour belonging to the Roman Infantry: and the Reaſon why this was done, was, not only that a Prediction concerning him might be fulfilled, (Zach. xii. 10, 12. which the Jews apply to the Meſſiah) but that his Death might be put beyond all Diſpute, which, had it been doubtful, muſt have made his Reſurrection (which is the greateſt Aſſurance we have of our own Reſurrection, and Glory with him) remain doubtful likewiſe.

St. John the Evangeliſt, who was an Eye-witneſs of this Paſſage, affirms it in a particular Manner, chap. xix. 35. and in the firſt Epiſtle, chap. v. 6. makes it a Matter of great Moment, when he tells us, "This is he that came by Water and by Blood; not by Water only, but by Water and Blood." The Force of whoſe Reaſoning (according to the learned Hammond) is this, —"That, as Water was the Emblem of our Saviour's Purity, and Blood the Evidence of his Fortitude and Patience, and both of thoſe proceeded from his Side, they jointly evince the Neceſſity of ſuch Purity and Patience, in every one that believes aright in Chriſt." The Jewiſh Doctors have a Tradition (as Dr. Lightfoot acquaints us) that when Moſes ſmote the Rock, there firſt came forth Blood, and then Water. Whether the Apoſtle might have reſpect to that Tradition when he calls Chriſt that Rock, 1 Cor. x. 4. is uncertain; but among the many other important Deſigns of this Water and Blood, the Ancients have well obſerved, that, by a ſpecial Act of God's Providence, there flowed at this Time, from our Saviour's Side, the two Sacraments of his Church, Baptiſm and the Supper of the Lord. As to the natural Reaſon of this Flux of Water and Blood from our Lord's Body, Anatomiſts tell us, that there is a Capſula,

near the Heart, called the Pericardium, which hath Water in it, of continual Uſe to cool the Heart; and that the coming out of Water here with the Blood, was a ſure Evidence of the wounding his very Heart, and conſequently of the Certainty of his Death.

The Riches and honourable Station of Joſeph, are mentioned, not out of any Vanity and Oſtentation, that a Perſon of ſo conſiderable a Figure ſhould pay Reſpect to the Body of our Bleſſed Lord; but chiefly to ſhew how ſtrangely God brought about an ancient Prophecy concerning the Meſſiah, viz. that, notwithſtanding the infamous Manner of his dying, he ſhould "make his Grave with the Rich at his Death," Iſa. liii. 9. which in itſelf, was a moſt unlikely Thing; not only becauſe the Bodies of them that were crucified, did, by the Roman Laws, hang upon the Gibbet, ſometimes until they were conſumed; but becauſe the Jews, tho' they did not allow of this Severity to the Dead, did nevertheleſs always bury their Malefactors in ſome public neglected, and ignominious Place; and ſo, in all Probability, muſt our Saviour have been treated, had not Joſeph applied himſelf to the Governor, in whoſe Diſpoſal the Bodies of executed Perſons were.

Ramatha (from whence Arimathea is formed) ſignifies Height. It is placed by St. Jerom between Lydda and Joppa; but modern Travellers ſpeak of it as lying between Joppa and Jeruſalem, and ſituated on a Mountain, though very different from Ramathaim-Zophim, the Place where Samuel was born, and which lay to the North, whereas Arimathæa was to the Weſt of Jeruſalem.

It may well ſeem ſtrange, that Joſeph, who never durſt openly profeſs a Regard to Jeſus while living, ſhould now, when he had ſuffered all the Ignominy of a Malefactor, not ſtick to intereſt himſelf for his honourable Interment. But, beſides, that this might be an Inſtance of the Efficacy of thoſe Impreſſions, which God makes upon Mens Minds, even at the moſt unlikely Seaſons of prevailing; the Deſire which Pilate had expreſſed, to ſave our Lord's Life, and avowed Unwillingneſs to condemn him, together with the Prodigies that had accompanied his Crucifixion, and made now every Heart relent, might be Motive enough for him to go in boldly to Pilate (as St. Mark expreſſes it) and beg the Body of him, before it was taken from the Croſs. According to the Miſhna, the neareſt Relations of thoſe that ſuffered as Criminals, were not permitted to put their Bodies into their Family Tombs, until their Fleſh was all conſumed in the public Sepulchres; and this might poſſibly be the Reaſon why Joſeph made ſuch Haſte with his Requeſt to the Governor, viz. that he might prevent our Lord from being caſt into one of the public Charnel-houſes, appointed for the Reception of Malefactors Bodies.

The Nicodemus above mentioned, is the ſame Ruler of the Jews, and Maſter

ter of Iſrael, as the Evangeliſt calls him, John iii. 1, 10. who, at our Lord's firſt coming to Jeruſalem, after he had entered upon his Miniſtry, held a private Conference with him, and for ever after was his Diſciple, tho' he made no open Profeſſion of it till after his Paſſion. Whether it was before or after this Time, that he received Baptiſm from ſome of Chriſt's Diſciples, is a Thing uncertain; but there is Reaſon to believe, that the Jews, when they came to be informed of it, depoſed him from the Dignity of a Senator, excommunicated him, and drove him out of Jeruſalem. Nay, it is farther ſaid, that they would have put him to death, but that, in Conſideration to Gameliel, who was his uncle, or Couſin-german, they contented themſelves with beating him almoſt to Death, and plundering his Goods. 'Tis added likewiſe, that Gamaliel conveyed him to his Country-houſe, where he provided himſelf with Things neceſſary for his Support, and when he died, buried him honourably by St. Stephen.

But to go on with our Narration:

Not far from the Place of Execution, there was a Garden belonging to Joſeph, where he had lately hewn out of a Rock, a Sepulchre for his own proper Interment. Having therefore embalmed our Saviour's Body, and wound it up in the Linnen Cloaths, here they buried him, and with a large Stone cut out of the Rock for that Purpoſe, cloſed the Mouth of the Sepulchre: But Mary Magdalen, and the other Women who were preſent at his Death, and aſſiſted at his Burial, having taken Notice of the Place where he was laid, went and prepared freſh Spices for his farther Embalment, as ſoon as the Sabath-day was over.

On the Sabbath-day the Rulers of the Jews came to Pilate, and informed him, "That our Lord (whom they called an Impoſtor) having in his Life-Time, made it his Boaſt, that on the third Day, he would riſe again from the Dead, they therefore requeſted of him, that he would order the Sepulchre to be kept under a ſtrong Guard, until that Day was paſt, leſt his Diſciples ſhould ſteal him away by Night, and then give it out, that he was riſen from the Dead; which might prove a more dangerous Seduction to the People, than any Thing they had yet fallen into. Whereupon he gave them Leave to have a Detachment of the Guard of the Temple, and to poſt them near the Sepulchre; which accordingly they did; and to ſecure it againſt all private Attempts, ſet a Seal on the Stone that was at the Mouth of it.

Early next Morning, even as the Sun was riſing, Mary Magdalen, and the other Women, who, on Friday Evening had prepared Spices and Perfumes, went to the Sepulchre, to embalm again our Saviour's Body; being ignorant of the Guard that was placed there. Their whole Care and Conſultation, in the Way, was how they might get the Stone, that was at the Entrance, removed. But, before they arrived at the Place, an Angel from Heaven

Heaven had rolled it away, and ſat upon it; at the Sight of whom (for his Countenance was like Lightning) and the Noiſe of the Earthquake, which accompanied his Appearance, the Guards fell down, like ſo many dead Men; ſo the Women had free Entrance into the Sepulchre, but were not a little aſtoniſhed to ſee the Body gone, and an Angel, in a refulgent Habit, ſitting in the Place, where it had lain. Frightened at this Apparition, they made all the Haſte they could, out of the Sepulchre, but were met by another Angel, in the like glorious Apparel, who not only acquainted them with our Lord's Reſurrection, according to what he had foretold his Diſciples; but, to give them a fuller Conviction, reconducted them into the Sepulchre; ſhewed them that the Place where he had lain was empty; and ordered them to go immediately, and carry the Apoſtles (but more eſpecially Peter) the News thereof. The Women accordingly, filled with Fear and Joy, and Wonder altogether, haſtened to find out the Apoſtles, to whom they related what they had heard and ſeen; but, inſtead of believing them, they looked upon this, as no more than the Product of a weak and frightened Imagination.

Out of Curioſity, however, Peter and John ran to the Sepulchre, and found the Thing true, according to the Women's Report; the Body gone; the burying Cloths lying on the Ground; and the Napkin, that was about his Head, very carefully folded, and laid by itſelf. Notwithſtanding this, ſuch was their Incredulity, that they returned Home, never ſuppoſing any Thing elſe, but that ſomebody had taken him away. Mary Magdalen, who, by this Time, was again returned to the Sepulchre, ſtayed behind the two Apoſtles weeping; and, as ſhe ſtooped down to look in, ſaw two Angels in bright Apparel, ſitting where the Body had lain, one at the Head, and the other at the Feet. As the Angels were enquiring of her the Occaſion of her Tears, and ſhe telling them, that it was the Loſs of her Lord's Body, ſhe happened to turn herſelf round, and ſaw Jeſus himſelf; but, ſuppoſing him to be the Maſter of the Garden (where the Sepulchre was) ſhe deſired of him, that if he had removed the Body any where, he would be ſo kind as to let her know, that ſhe might take care of it. Hereupon our Lord calling her by her Name, ſhe immediately knew him, and throwing herſelf at his Feet, was going to embrace him; but he forbade her, upon Account, that he had not, as yet, aſcended to his Father, and only required her to acquaint his Apoſtles with his Reſurrection, and immediate Aſcenſion into Heaven; which ſhe failed not to do, but ſtill they gave no Credit to her Report.

In the mean Time, ſome of the Guards, in a great Fright, fled into the City, and related all that had occurred to the Chief-prieſts and Rulers, who immediately aſſembled themſelves to conſult upon this important Affair, and came at length to this Reſolution, viz. " To bribe the Soldiers with a large Sum of Money, and thereby engage

gage them to give it out, among the People, that while themſelves were aſleep, the Diſciples of Jeſus came, and ſtole him away; promiſing them withal, that in Caſe this their pretended Neglect ſhould come to the Governor's Ears, they would take Care to pacify him." The Soldiers accordingly took the Money, and obeyed their Orders; and this Report was current among the Jews for many Years after.

Here let us review what we have now been relating.

This Garden has been long ſince converted into a Church, called the Church of the Sepulchre, as being built over the Place, where our Lord's Sepulchre was. To fit this Place for the Structure of a Church, the firſt Founders were obliged to reduce it to a plain Area, which they did by cutting down ſeveral Parts of the Rock, and by raiſing up others: But, in this Work, Care was taken, that none of thoſe Parts of the Place, which were more immediately concerned in our Lord's Paſſion, ſhould be either altered or diminiſhed; inſomuch that the Part of it, where Chriſt is ſaid to have been faſtened to, and lifted upon the Croſs, is left entire, ſtanding at this Day, eighteen Steps above the common Floor of the Church, and the holy Sepulchre itſelf, which was at firſt a Cave hewn into a Rock under Ground, having had the Rock cut away with it all round, is now, as it were, a Grotto above Ground.

There are ſeveral Circumſtances in the De cription of our Saviour's Tomb, which contribute very greatly to the Confirmation of the Truth of his Reſurrection. As firſt, the Place of his Interment was near adjoining to the City, that thereby the Miracle of his Reſurrection might be better known to all the Jews, and his own Apoſtles more eſpecially. Secondly, His Tomb was a new one, wherein never Man before was laid, and therefore, when his Body left this Sepulchre empty, no Suſpicion could remain of its being any other Body than that which Joſeph had taken down from the Croſs, and diſpoſed of in that Place. Thirdly, It was hewn out of a Rock, incapable of being undermined, or dug thro', and therefore there was no poſſible Way for the Perſon depoſited in a Place ſo contrived, to get out again, except only at the Mouth or Door of the Cave. And yet, Fourthly, A large Stone, which (according to Mr. Maundrel, who ſaw it) is two Yards and a Quarter long, one broad, and one thick, cloſed up the Entrance of it; all which was watched by a ſtrong Guard of ſixty Soldiers: So that, as the Centry would not ſuffer the Body to be conveyed out by this Way, the Nature of the Place would not allow it by any other; therefore had not our Lord been more than Man, he could never have forced his Paſſage out. Of ſuch mighty Significance is it to us, that ſo punctual a Deſcription is given the World of our Bleſſed Lord's Burial, and all the Circumſtraces relating to it, ſince they all contribute great Strength to theſe two moſt important Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, the Death and Reſurrection of Jeſus.

This

This Sepulchre of Joſeph's, which fell to our Lord's Share (according to the Deſcription of thoſe that have lately ſeen it) is a Kind of ſmall Chamber, almoſt ſquare within; whoſe Height, from Bottom to Top, is eight Feet and an Inch; its Length ſix Feet and an Inch; and its Breadth, fifteen Feet and ten Inches; its Entrance, which looks towards the Eaſt, is but four Feet high, and two Feet ten Inches wide. The Place within, where our Lord's Body was laid, takes up a whole Side of the Cave. It is a Stone raiſed from the Ground to the Height of two Feet eleven Inches; whoſe Length is five Feet eleven Inches; and its Breadth two Feet eight Inches placed lengthwiſe from Eaſt to Weſt. The Stone is ſtill remaining, even to this Day; but the particular Parts of it are not viſible, it being incruſted over with white Marble.

It is generally ſuppoſed, that this Guard of the Temple was a large Detachment of Roman Soldiers; who, in the Time of the Feaſt, kept Centry at the Gates of the Temple, to prevent ſuch Diſorders as might very well happen among ſuch a large Concourſe of People: For, by the Sequel of their Story it appears, Matth. xxviii. 19. that they depended upon Pilate, were ſubject to his Correction, and conſequently were not Levites (as ſome imagine) but Roman Soldiers.

When Daniel was caſt into the Lions Den, it is ſaid, "That the King ſailed the Stone that was laid upon the Mouth of it, with his own Signet, and with the Signet of his Lords, that the Purpoſe might not be changed concerning Daniel," chap. vi. 17. and from hence, ſome have ſuppoſed, that the Stone, wherewith our Lord's Sepulchre was cloſed, was ſealed with Pilate's Signet, becauſe it was a Matter of public Concern; and others have fancied, that it was farther ſecured by a great Chain that went acroſs it, and that the Marks thereof were viſible in the venerable Bede's Time.

The ſeeming Oppoſition between what his recorded in the xvith Chapter of Mark's Goſpel, concerning ſome Circumſtances that happened at our Lord's Sepulchre, and the Narrations of the other Evangeliſts made ſome of the Ancients (as St. Jerom informs us) call in Queſtion its Authority. But, as this Chapter was owned in the Times of Irenæus, and is quoted in the Apoſtolic Conſtitutions, a ſmall Matter of diſtinguiſhing, added to what Doctor Whitby has done, by way of Appendix to it, will be a Means ſufficient to reconcile them. As to the Difference between the Account in St. Luke, who mentions the Viſion of Angels to Mary Magdalen, before her going to Peter, and that in St. John, who makes it ſubſequent to it; our learned Hammond is of Opinion, that this and ſeveral other Inconſiſtencies may be adjuſted by this one Conſideration, That St. Luke writing from Notes, which he had collected from Eye-witneſſes, and not from his own Knowledge, obſerves not ſo exactly the Order of Time, wherein Things were done and ſpoken, but oftentimes in another Method, puts together

together Things of Affinity to one another, tho' not done or ſaid at the ſame Time. For ſo in Relation to the Tranſactions at our Lord's Sepulchre, he firſt ſets down all that concerns the Women together, and then that which concerns Peter; tho' Part of that which concerned the Women, was done after what is mentioned of St. Peter: For the punctual Obſervation of Order (ſays our Annotator) is not neceſſary when Things themſelves are truly recited. The right Order of the Story he therefore ſuppoſes to be this,—"Mary and the other Woman came to the Sepulchre, but found, that before their Coming, an Angel, with an Earthquake, had rolled away the Stone, and that the Body was gone. Upon this Mary returns to Peter and John; tells them what ſhe had ſeen; and they, to ſatisfy themſelves of the Truth of her Report, haſten to the Sepulchre; and having found Things juſt as ſhe told them, went away again. In the mean Time, the Women ſtay at the Sepulchre, wondering at this ſtrange Event; and then follows the Viſion of Angels, ſitting upon the Stone, and within the Sepulchre, ſpeaking to the Women, and aſſuring them of the Reality of Chriſt's Reſurrection; upon which they depart a ſecond Time, to tell the Apoſtles the News."

Peter is here named, not as the Prince of the Apoſtles, but (as the Fathers ſay) for his Conſolation, and to take off the Scruple, which might lie upon his Spirits, whether, after his Denial of his Maſter (with ſuch horrid Aggravations attending it) he had not forfeited his Right to be one of our Lord's Diſciples.

The Cuſtom of Interment among the Jews was, to roll the dead Body (as we read our Saviour's was, John xix. 39, 40.) up in Spices, which, though they preſerved it, in ſome Meaſure, from Corruption, by their glewy Nature, could not but make the Cloaths that were uſed with them, cling ſo cloſe to the Skin, as not to be drawn off without a great deal of Time and Difficulty. When therefore theſe Coverings were found regularly pulled off, wrapped up, and laid by; this plainly ſhews, that the Diſciples could have no Hand in ſtealing away their Maſter's Body. For, do Thieves, after they have rifled an Houſe, uſe to ſpend Time in putting Things into Order again? Or can it enter into any ſober Man's Thoughts, that they, who came by Stealth, and in Danger of their Lives (as the Diſciples certainly muſt have done upon ſuch an Adventure) ſhould thus ſtay, to awaken the Guard, and trifle away their Time, in ſuch hazardous and unneceſſary Niceties. Had they been really engaged in this Affair, they certainly would have taken away the Body at once, without tarrying to unbind and undreſs it. And therefore the Condition, in which the Sepulchre was found, to every conſiderate Man, muſt be a ſufficient Confutation of that idle Pretence of the Jews, His Diſciples came and ſtole him away.

Various are the Senſes which Interpreters have been pleaſed to affix to the Reaſon, which our Lord aſſigns,

for his rejecting this Woman's Homage and Embraces, I am not yet aſcended to my Father. Some imagine, that Mary ſtill retaining her Notions of a temporal Kingdom, concluded, that our Lord was now riſen, on purpoſe to aſſume it, and therefore fell down to adore him; but that he, willing to raiſe her Mind to ſpiritual and celeſtial Thoughts, gave her to underſtand, that, as yet it was not a proper Time for her to make her Addreſſes to him; becauſe he was not yet aſcended into Heaven, from whence he was to adminiſter his Kingdom, and to ſend down the Holy Ghoſt, in order to form a ſpiritual Communion between himſelf and his true Diſciples. Others ſuppoſe, that the Woman imagined, that our Lord was riſen again, in the Manner that Lazarus did, viz. to live upon Earth, as he had done before; and that therefore, to convince her of the contrary, he bid her not touch him, as a mortal Man, becauſe I am not yet aſcended into Heaven, but, in a ſhort Time ſhall; and that is the Place where you are to pay me your Homage and Adoration. Others again ſay, that by a Figure, common enough among Grammarians, who frequently change one Tenſe for another, our Saviour's Words may denote, that he was not then about to aſcend, but to ſtay many Days upon Earth; ſo that Mary might have Space and Opportunity enough to pay her Adorations, and to ſatisfy herſelf in the Truth of his Reſurrection. But theſe, and ſeveral other Interpretations of the like Kind, are far from being natural, and ſeem calculated on purpoſe to exclude the Notion of our Saviour's frequent Aſcenſions, during his Stay upon Earth, after his Reſurrection, which, in the Courſe of the ſubſequent Anſwers, we hope to evince to be true.

Some are of Opinion, that the Report, which the Evangeliſts ſpeak of, as current among the Jews, that the Diſciples ſtole away the Body by Night, was not that our Lord's Diſciples came and ſtole him away, but that the Soldiers were corrupted by the High-prieſts to ſay ſo. This, indeed, gives a quite different Turn to the Thing, and is very favourable to the Chriſtian Cauſe; but yet, whoever conſiders the circular Letters, mentioned by Juſtin Martyr, which the Rulers in Jeruſalem ſent to the principal Jews all the World over, concerning the Fact, and the great Pains, which (as Tertullian informs us) they every where took to propagate it, together with the Care, which he, and the other antient Apologiſts employed to confute this ſenſeleſs, but malicious Lye, muſt needs be of a contrary Opinion, viz. that the Report was ſpread, not againſt the Jewiſh Rulers, but the Chriſtian Diſciples; and was not quite extinct, when St. Matthew wrote his Goſpel, Chap. xxviii. 15. which was much about eight Years after Chriſt's Death.

Let us now return to our Hiſtory.

On this ſame Day of Chriſt's Reſurrection, as two of his Diſciples were taking a Walk, in the Afternoon, to a Town called Emmaus, and diſcourſing, as they went along, of what had lately happened; Jeſus joined himſelf to their

their Company, but they knew him not, and observing that they looked melancholly, he asked them the Subject of their Discourse, and what it was that made them so disconsolate? To which one of them replied, "That the Subject of their Discourse, was too notorious even to escape the Knowledge of the greatest Stranger; that it was concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who, indeed, was a great Prophet; one whom they expected would have been the King, and Redeemer of Israel; but, to their great Disappointment, had of late been delivered to Death, by their Rulers, and crucified. And, what is more astonishing, continued he, this very Day (which is the third since his Death) some Women of our Company, having been early at the Sepulchre, and not finding the Body, have surprized us with an Account that they had seen a Vision of Angels, who assured them that he was alive; which, in Part, was confirmed by some of our Men too, who went to the Sepulchre, and found it empty, but did not see him."

Hereupon our Lord took Occasion to reprove their Incredulity, and, from the Testimony of the Prophets, to convince them, that it was highly necessary the Messiah should suffer Death, and rise again, in order to a glorious Exaltation. As they drew near to the Village, where they intended to spend that Night, Jesus seemed as if he had farther to go; but they being unwilling to loose his good Conversation, with some Intreaty, prevailed with him to stay. He did so: And, as he was sitting at the Table with them, took Bread, blessed it, brake it, and delivered it to them, as he was wont to do; whereupon their Eyes were opened, and they knew him; but immediately he vanished out of their Sight.

As soon as the two Disciples had recovered from their Surprize, they hastened to Jerusalem, where the Apostles were met together; who, upon their Arrival, informed them, that their Lord was certainly risen, and had appeared unto Peter; whilst they, in their Turns, related what had happened to them, in the Country; how Jesus had walked, and conversed with them, and how they came to know him by breaking of Bread. But, notwithstanding all these Testimonies, several among them remained still incredulous.

For Fear of the Jews the Apostles had shut the Door, and were now sat down to Supper in a private Room, late in the Evening, when our blessed Saviour came in, and saluted them; and, that they might not take him for a Spirit or Phantom, but for the very Person that was crucified in their Sight, he shewed them the Wounds in his Hands, his Feet, and his Side. Nay, that he might cure them of all Scruples and Doubtfulness, he eat a Piece of broiled Fish, and some Honeycomb before them all; and then, having a little upbraided them with their Unbelief, he gave them several great and weighty Instructions, a Power to understand the Scripture more perfectly, a Renovation of their Commission to preach to all Nations, a Power and Authority to remit or retain Sins, a Communication of the blessed Spirit,

by breathing on them, and a Promiſe of ſending him more plentifully (to enable them to be Witneſſes of his Reſurrection) before they were to depart from Jeruſalem. And thus ended the Firſt-Day of the Week, which, in Honour of our bleſſed Saviour's Reſurrection, has, ever ſince, been kept as the Sabbath among Chriſtians.

At the above-mentioned Appearance of our bleſſed Saviour, all the Apoſtles (except Thomas) were preſent; and, when they recounted to him every Particular, that had happened in his Abſence, ſo far was he from giving his Aſſent to them, that he openly declared, that unleſs he had the utmoſt Evidence of his Senſes, by putting his Finger into the Holes in his Hands and Side, he would not believe a Word of what they told him. On the Sunday following therefore, when, in the ſame Place, they were all met together, with the Doors ſhut for fear of the Jews, and Thomas with them, Jeſus came, and ſtanding in the Midſt of them, ſaluted them as formerly, with the Bleſſing of Peace. After that, turning to Thomas, he offered him the Satisfaction which he deſired, viz. the feeling his Hands and his Side, where the Nails and the Spear had pierced; which, when that Apoſtle had done, and upon Conviction, cried out in Tranſport, "My God, and my Lord!" our Saviour gave him to underſtand, that his believing, after ſuch a demonſtrative Evidence, was neither ſo praiſe-worthy nor rewardable, as was the Faith of thoſe who had not the like Conviction.

After this Appearance to the Apoſtles, in a full Body, they all reſolved (purſuant to their Lord's Directions) to leave Judæa, and return into their own Province of Galilee. They had not been long there, before Peter, and ſeveral others of them went a fiſhing in the Lake or Sea of Tiberias; but after much toiling all Night, they caught nothing. In the Morning, as they were making to Shore, a Perſon unknown to them, being informed of their ill Succeſs, adviſed them to caſt their Net on the Right-Side of the Ship, which when they had done, they encloſed ſo great a Number of large Fiſh, as made John ſuſpect, that the Perſon on Shore might poſſibly be their Maſter. This he no ſooner ſuggeſted to Peter, but Peter, impatient of Delay, throws off his Coat, and jumps into the Sea and gets to Land, while the other Apoſtles had much ado to haul the Veſſel and the Net, ſo loaded with Fiſh, ſafe to Shore. The Number of the Fiſh was an hundred and fifty: But, what was more ſurpriſing, at their Landing they found a Fire ready made, Fiſh broiling on it, and Bread ſtanding by. This notwithſtanding, our Lord ordered them to bring ſome of thoſe which they had caught, and having aſked them to ſit down with him, he not only diſtributed them, but eat ſome of the Bread and Fiſh himſelf, to give them a ſtill farther Aſſurance of the Reality of his Reſurrection.

When Dinner was ended, he entered into Converſation with Peter; and having thrice demanded of him if he loved

loved him, and thrice received a Declaration that he did, he each Time enjoined him to take Care of the Flock, which he had committed to him. After this, in a figurative Speech, he ſignified to him by what Manner of Death he was to glorify God, even by Crucifixion; but when Peter deſired to know the Fate of his favourite Apoſtle St. John, inſtead of gratifying his Curioſity, he required him rather to attend to his own Concerns, and as he was to reſemble him in the Manner of his Death, ſo to endeavour to imitate him in his Deportment under it, "If I will that he ſtay till I come, what is that to thee, follow me!" This Anſwer of our Saviour's, however, gave Occaſion to a Report among the reſt of the Diſciples, that John was never to die; but himſelf confuted that Opinion in his Goſpel, and by ſurviving the Fate of Jeruſalem, verified what our Saviour meant.

After this our Lord, having appointed a ſolemn Meeting of as many of his Diſciples, as could conveniently be got together, and named a certain Mountain in Galilee, for that Purpoſe, he there appeared, not only to the eleven Apoſtles, but to five hundred Brethren at once. Here he acquainted his Apoſtles, that all Power, both in Heaven and Earth, was given to him; commanded them to inſtruct all Nations, and to baptize them "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt," and to preſs them to the Obſervation of all his Precepts; foretold them what mighty Signs and Wonders ſhould attend thoſe who were true Converts to his Religion; and promiſed them his daily Protection and Aſſiſtance, even unto the End of the World.

Forty Days was the Time pre-ordained for our Lord's Continuance upon Earth, after his Reſurrection. Theſe Days were now almoſt expired, when the Apoſtles (according as they were ordered) with ſome of their ſelect Friends, returned to Jeruſalem, and there aſſembled themſelves in a private Place. Our bleſſed Saviour came to them; and, among other Things, relating to the Government of his Church, gave them particularly in Charge, that they ſhould not depart from Jeruſalem, until they had received that miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, which he had promiſed, and would ſhortly ſend down upon them. This Effuſion of the Spirit the Apoſtles imagined might poſſibly be an Introduction to his glorious temporal Kingdom, which ſtill ran in their Heads; and therefore they aſked him, whether he intended, at that Time, "to reſtore the Kingdom to Iſrael?" but he checked their Enquiry, and gave them to underſtand, that, after the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them, they would have juſter Notions of theſe Matters, and be ſufficiently enabled to be the authentick Witneſſes of his Life and Actions, all the World over; and with theſe Words he led all the Company out of the City, to that Part of Mount Olivet, which was neareſt to Bethany, and there, as he was lifting up his Hands, and giving them his

his Benediction, while they continued all in an adoring Poſture, he was parted from them, gradually taken up in a Cloud, and carried triumphantly into Heaven, where he now ſitteth at the Right-Hand of God, God bleſſed for ever. Amen.

Again let us review the foregoing Paſſages.

Emmaus (which was afterwards made a City, and called Nicopolis) was at this Time, a ſmall Village, about ſeven Miles diſtant from Jeruſalem, to the Weſt, where it is ſuppoſed, by Bede and others, that either Cleophas, or his Companion had an Houſe; which, by their importuning Jeſus to go with them, ſeems not improbable, becauſe they could not purpoſe to entertain him ſo commodiouſly, or hoſpitably in an Inn.

Whether it was, that after his Reſurrection, his Perſon was ſo conſiderably changed, that thoſe who knew him before, could not eaſily diſtinguiſh him; or that he appeared in an Habit quite different from what he uſed to wear, which, for ſome Time, might hinder them from recollecting who he was, or that he ſuſpended the Operations of their Senſes, that he might have a better Opportunity to inſtruct their Underſtandings; or that, by an extraordinary Power he withheld their Eyes from perceiving him: upon which, by removing of that Impediment, they immediately knew him. Any of theſe Cauſes will anſwer the Purpoſe better, than that we ſhould impute (as ſome do) their not knowing their Maſter, to their exceſſive Grief and Sorrow.

Two Diſciples going to Emmaus were diſcourſing together upon the late extraordinary Events. He, who was the Spokeſman is ſaid to be Cleophas, Luke xxiv. 18. who was the Brother of Joſeph, the Huſband of the Virgin Mary, and ſo reputed the Uncle of Chriſt, whoſe Son Simeon, by the joint Conſent of the Apoſtles then living, was made Biſhop of Jeruſalem, after St. James, as being the neareſt of Kin to our Saviour.

Jeſus ſeemed willing to go farther: and ſo very probably would have done, had not the Diſciples preſſed him to ſtay with them: But, ſuppoſing he had been reſolved to abide with them, and was minded to try the Temper of his Fellow-travellers, we cannot from hence charge him either with Diſſimulation or Deceit; becauſe, tho' our Words ought to be certain Interpreters of our Thoughts, and are not to be employed ſo, as to deceive any, yet walking hath no certain Signification, nor was it ever inſtituted to be an Indication of the Mind.

The original Word of St. Luke, which our Tranſlation has rendered they conſtrained him, in Terms, literal indeed, ſeems in this Place a little too harſh; becauſe it is very improbable (eſpecially if we conſider the Context) that theſe two Diſciples ſhould offer any Force or Violence to Jeſus to make him go with them.

Origen is of Opinion, that our Bleſſed Lord, for the forty Days, that he

was

was upon Earth after his Reſurrection, could make himſelf viſible or invifible, when and to whom he pleaſed. It is not to be doubted, indeed but that he had the ſame Body that was depoſited in the Grave; but then, what the Powers of a raiſed and glorified Body (eſpecially when in Conjunction with the Deity) are, we cannot tell; only we may infer, that our Saviour could, at leaſt with the ſame Facility, diſappear to his Diſciples now, as he did to the Jews, when they were about to ſtone him, John viii. 53. which it is generally ſuppoſed he did, by the Medium of a Cloud caſt over his Body.

He eat a Piece of broiled Fleſh, not to ſatisfy any Hunger, that his Body could ſuffer after his Reſurrection; but to prove to them that his Body was truly raiſed, and himſelf was really preſent. And, ſince it cannot be ſuppoſed, that Chriſt, in this Action, deſigned any Illuſion, it follows from his very eating, that his Body had thoſe Parts by which we chew our Meat, and withal a Stomach to receive.

Our Saviour gave his Diſciples a Power to underſtand the Scriptures more perfectly; this the Evangeliſt tells us, Chriſt did by opening their Minds, Luke xxiv. 25. for, it is one Thing, to open the Scriptures themſelves, or to explain them; and another to open their Underſtandings to perceive them; and Chriſt, very probably, did the latter, by giving them now ſome firſt Fruits of that Spirit of Prophecy on them at the Day of Pentecoſt.

Tho' the Greek Word tranſlated Nation, does, in ſome particular Places, ſignify the Tribes and Families of the Jews; yet this we are to obſerve, that wherever Mention is made of preaching the Goſpel, in order to gain Converts to the Chriſtian Faith, the Words relates primarily, to the ſeveral Parts of Judæa, and to the Jews, wherever they are in their Diſperſions abroad; then ſecondarily, to the Gentiles mingled with the Jews; and finally to the whole Gentile World, when, upon the Jews rejecting the Goſpel, the Apoſtles were forced to depart from them; for ſuch the Tenor of their Commiſſion, and ſuch their conſtant Practice was. "It was neceſſary (ſay Paul and Barnabas to the Jews) that the Word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to you (which refers, I ſuppoſe to ſome Precept of Chriſt which made it neceſſary) but ſeeing ye have put it from you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" Acts xiii. 46.

As Chriſt's Reſurrection was a Matter of Fact, it muſt be proved by the Teſtimony of Eye-witneſſes, who, if they be honeſt Men, and ſuffer the greateſt Prejudices in their Fortunes, Reputation and Life, for this Teſtimony, give us the greater Reaſon to believe it. For their Honeſty will not ſuffer them, upon any Account whatever, to deviate from the Truth; their Intereſt and Prudence will not permit them (without any Neceſſity laid upon them) to teſtify a Falſhood, much more the groſſeſt Falſhood, to their utmoſt Damage, and without any Proſpect of Advantage; and then, if they confirm this their Teſtimony, by all Kinds of Signs, Miracles

racles and wonderous Powers, exerciſed by themſelves, and others who embraced their Teſtimony; and if this be done in all Places, and on all Perſons, for a whole Age or Ages; this makes it a Thing impoſſible, that they ſhould thus atteſt a Lye: And therefore our Lord bids the Apoſtles ſtay at Jeruſalem, till they were thus empowered, by Virtue from on High, to confirm this Teſtimony.

The Jewiſh Sabbath was, at firſt, inſtituted, not barely in Commemoration of God's Creating the World, but (as there is another Reaſon ſubjoined) in Memory of their Deliverance from the Egyptian Bondage: "For remember that thou waſt a Servant in the Land of Egypt, therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the Sabbath-day," Deut. v. 15. Now as this Bondage of theirs was an Emblem of our Captivity under Sin, and their Deliverance a Type that our ſpiritual Redemption was to be accompliſhed, it became proper that the old Jewiſh Sabbath, i.e. the Seventh-day, ſhould be paſſed over, and the firſt made Choice of, to be honoured with two ſuch glorious Miracles, as the Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Lord from the Dead, and the Coming of the Holy Ghoſt from Heaven. After this, indeed, we find the Apoſtles frequenting the Synagogue on the Jewiſh Sabbath, but from the Time of our Lord's Reſurrection, they never did it (as before) according to the Commandment, but according to Cuſtom, or as the Manner was, Acts xvii. 6. and therefore we have Reaſon to believe, that from the very firſt, they looked upon the ancient Sabbath ſuperſeded by this other, which from the Beginning they called the Lord's Day; and from the Beginning employed in Acts of religious Worſhip: To which Purpoſe we find Ignatius exhorting Chriſtians not to baptize with the Jews, but to live according to our Lord's Day, in which our Life aroſe with him.

What might be the Occaſion of the Apoſtle Thomas's Abſence, is variouſly conjectured. Some are of Opinion, that as all fled from their Maſter, when he was apprehended in the Garden, they did not ſo ſoon aſſemble again, but by Degrees dropped in, one by one, as they recovered from their Fright; and that therefore, at this Time, Thomas was not returned to the Company. But others, from the natural Temper of this Apoſtle (as he appears from the Scripture Paſſages, wherein he is concerned, to be very ſcrupulous, and hard of Belief) rather think, that taking Offence at the Apoſtles eaſy Credulity, (as he deemed it) and looking upon all that the Women from the Sepulchre, and the two Diſciples from Emmaus had ſaid, as ſo many idle Tales, he left the Company, in pure Diſguſt, not long before our Saviour came in.

The Manner by which the Apoſtle Thomas might bring himſelf to the Reſolution, that he would believe nothing but from the Evidence of his Senſes, might poſſibly be by ſome ſuch Arguments as theſe,—"Jeſus of Nazareth was put to Death upon the Croſs; and being dead, was laid and ſealed up in a Sepulchre, which was ſtrictly watched

watched by a Guard of Soldiers: But I am told, and required to believe, that notwithſtanding all this, he is riſen, and is indeed alive. Now ſurely, Things ſuitable to the ſtated Courſe of Nature, ſhould be believed, before ſuch as are quite beſide it; and for a Man to return to Life, is preternatural, but that thoſe, who report this, may be miſtaken, is very natural and uſual. Dead I ſaw him; but that he is riſen, I only hear. In what I ſee with mine own Eyes, I cannot eaſily be deceived; but in what I only hear, I may, and often am. Here being two Things then propoſed to my Belief, my Reaſon ſuggeſts to me, that I ought to choſe that which is more credible; but it ſeems more credible, that a ſmall Number of Witneſſes (frightened and diſturbed as they are) ſhould be deceived or (as honeſt as once they were) may conſpire to deceive me, than that one ſhould riſe from the Dead;" and therefore, except, &c.

" My God, and my Lord!" This is a noble Confeſſion of the Apoſtle's Faith; wherein he not only recognizes Jeſus for the Meſſiah, the very ſame Lord to whom he had been a Servant and a Companion, during the Space of his Miniſtry, but owns likewiſe, and proclaims his divine Nature. For the Original here is in Terms ſo ſtrict, and with ſuch an Addition of the Greek Article, as the very Hereticks and Enemies to Truth confeſs to be the Character of the Word God, when taken in its moſt proper Senſe, and intended of the true God only. Nor can the Words (if put for a Note of Admiration only) be of Force ſufficient to expreſs any Conviction in Thomas; becauſe Expreſſions of Wonder, tho' they properly ſpeak Aſtoniſhment and Surprize, do not always imply Belief, and may therefore import the Strangeneſs, without the Truth of the Thing: whereas, our Saviour, in anſwer to Thomas, " becauſe thou haſt ſeen, thou haſt believed, John xx. 29. accepts this as a full and ſufficient Declaration of his Aſſent; and therefore to make it ſuch, we muſt allow that Paraphraſe, which ſome ancient Tranſlations ſupply it with, by reading, Thou art my Lord, thou art my God.

The Apoſtles as ſuch, had nothing to do, until the Holy Ghoſt ſhould deſcend upon them, and among the Jews it was accounted a Diſgrace to be idle. Since fiſhing therefore was the ordinary Occupation of ſeveral of them, in this intermediate Time, they thought it the beſt Way to betake themſelves to it; and that not only to keep themſelves employed, but to ſupply their own Want of Neceſſaries likewiſe, until they ſhould have a proper Call to the Miniſtry; when in all Probability, they gave over the Labours of their ſecular Employs, and devoted themſelves entirely to that Work.

By the Apoſtles not knowing our Saviour, one would think, that our Bleſſed Lord, after his Reſurrection, was not a little changed in his outward Appearance, ſince his Apoſtles (notwithſtanding more Interviews than one) could not ſo readily diſtinguiſh him either by his Voice or Looks. Upon this Occaſion, however, he ſeems,

by this Queſtion, John xxi. 5. to perſonate one, who might be come to buy ſome Fiſh of them, and under that Guiſe (whilſt they were buſy and employed) might more eaſily paſs upon them for a Stranger.

Peter hearing that the Lord was on Shore, throws on his Coat, and jumps into the Sea, to get the ſooner to him. The Text tells us, that he was naked before; but what is called naked, ſignifies only to have Part of the Body uncovered, or to be without a Gown or upper Garment, according to the Cuſtom of the Eaſtern People, and of the Romans, who, when they went abroad, or made any public Appearance, wore a long upper Garment, called in Latin, Toga. Of this Kind was what the Evangeliſt calls a Fiſher's Coat: and from hence it ſeems pretty plain, that Peter did not ſwim (as it is uſually thought) but waded to Land; ſince, if Decency was the Motive of putting on his Coat, he could not have preſerved that Decency, had he come dripping wet (as he muſt have been, upon the Suppoſition of his ſwimming) into his Maſter's Preſence.

The Fire, Fiſh and Bread on the Shore were all created, and produced by Chriſt out of nothing, to evidence, at this Time, his divine Power; but leſt there ſhould be thought any Deluſion in theſe, he ordered likewiſe ſome of the other, that were juſt then taken, to be dreſſed; and that they might not take him for an Apparition only, he invited them to dine with him. As therefore by the Miracle of creating, and miraculouſly catching the Fiſh, he proved himſelf to be a God, ſo by his preſent eating of the Fiſh, he evidenced himſelf to be a Man, and conſequently teaches us, that our exalted High-prieſt continues our Kinſman in Heaven.

It is not indeed ſaid expreſly, that at this Time he did eat; but ſince St. Peter tells us, that "they did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the Dead," Acts x. 41. and St. Luke teſtifies, that, on another Occaſion, "he did eat before them," Chap. xxiv. 42, 43. as he did then for the Confirmation of the Reſurrection, it is hardly to be doubted, but that he did it now for the ſame End.

Our Saviour's Words to St. Peter are, "Simon, Son of Jonas, loveſt thou me more than theſe," John xxi. 15. More than theſe what? Some will tell us, that our Saviour here pointing at the Nets and Fiſhing-boats, demanded of Peter whether he loved him and his Service, better than his ordinary Employment and Occupation; but this is a forced and jejune Expoſition. The Apoſtle to be ſure, before our Lord's being taken into Cuſtody, had been very liberal in his Profeſſions of Love to him. He had promiſed to go with him to Priſon and to Death; and to ſhew how much he ſurpaſſed the Reſt of his Brethren, "tho' all ſhould be offended becauſe of thee, ſays he, yet will not I," Matth. xxvi. 33. and yet, upon his Approach of the firſt Danger, he forgot all his Promiſes, and behaved more ingloriouſly than the Reſt. It is in Alluſion therefore to this, that our Lord begins this Diſcourſe with Peter;

Peter; that he calls to his Mind his former Speeches and contrary Performances; and, by thrice repeating this Queſtion, "Peter loveſt thou me?" in reſpect of his three Denials; and, at firſt adding the Words, more than theſe, in regard to his magnifying his Love, above all others, he now engages him, by the Senſe and Conſideration of his Fall, to a better Diſcharge, and a more conſtant Expreſſion of his Love, in converting Men to the Faith of Chriſt.

The Occaſion of St Peter's being put to Death, according to the Prediction of our Saviour, is generally reported to be,—That he, aſſiſted by St. Paul, had here alſo confounded the diabolical Illuſions of Simon Magus: Whereupon Nero, who was a Favourer of Magicians, being provoked (or as others think, to ingratiate himſelf with the People of Rome, after firing their City) gave Orders for his Execution, which the Prefects (in the Emperor's Abſence) took Care to ſee executed upon him and St. Paul, at the ſame Time. The latter, as a Denizen, was beheaded with a Sword, but St. Peter, who had no Claim to the like Priviledge, was ſentenced to Crucifixion. This, and the Torments preparatory to it, he underwent with marvellous Patience; and, as a Mark of his Humility, requeſted, and obtained to have his Body faſtened to the Croſs, with his Head downward, judging it too great an Honour to ſuffer in the ſame Manner and Poſture that his Lord had done.

If I will that he ſtay till I come, i. e. come in Judgment, to take Vengeance on the Jews. For tho' there are but two perſonal Advents, mentioned in Scripture; the firſt, when our Lord came into the World to redeem it, and the ſecond, when he ſhall return again to judge it; yet this is no objection againſt his intermediate Advent, which was not perſonal by any viſible Deſcent of his from Heaven, but virtual, and effected by his ſending the Roman Army againſt the Jews, and giving Signs from Heaven, and in the Clouds, of their approaching Ruin. So that the Senſe of our Saviour's Words is,—"If my Pleaſure is, that he live till the Diſſolution of the Jewiſh State:" And accordingly we find, that though Peter was put to death under Nero, yet St. John continued even to the Time of Trajan's Reign, above an hundred Years after our Saviour's Birth, and ſo thirty Years after that this Coming of his was paſt.

This Anſwer of our Saviour occaſioned a Report among the Diſciples, that John ſhould never die, becauſe the Chriſtians, at that Time, by the Coming of Chriſt, underſtood the laſt Judgment; whereas our Saviour intended it of the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which, in Effect, was a full Emblem of the final diſſolution of all things.

The Mountain, which our Saviour appointed to meet his Diſciples upon, is generally ſuppoſed to be Tabor, the Place where our Lord was transfigured; tho' ſome ſuppoſe it to be one that ſtood nearer the Lake of Tiberias.

When our Saviour foretold what mighty Signs and Wonders ſhould attend the true Converts of his Religion, we are not to ſuppoſe that he promiſed the Gift of Miracles to every Chriſtian Convert, ſince this would have made Miracles (which ſhould only be employed on important Occaſions, where the Glory of God, or the Good of Mankind is concerned) too common, and conſequently of no Validity at all. So that this Promiſe, tho' expreſſed in general Terms, muſt neceſſarily be to the Apoſtles, and apoſtolic Men. Of "their caſting out Devils, healing Diſeaſes, and ſpeaking with new Tongues," we have Inſtances almoſt innumerable. And from St. Paul it appears, that this Promiſe was literally fulfilled, when, after a Viper had faſtened upon his Hand, for ſome Time, he ſhook it off into the Fire, without receiving any Hurt, Acts xxviii. 5. and to the drinking of deadly Poiſons, we have it recorded by Papias of Barſabas, ſurnamed the Juſt; by Ado, in his Martyrology of the Cæcilian Soldier; and by Gregory of Tours; of Sabinus Biſhop of Ganoſo; that they three did without any Miſchief to themſelves. But as Miracles of this Kind were more liable to Exceptions, than ſuch as were performed upon Unbelievers (Men being apt to think, that there might be ſome Antidotes againſt the Venom of theſe Beaſts, or the pernicious Effects of theſe Draughts) it may be owned, that Providence thought fit to be more ſparing in affording theſe.

"Lo, I am with you always to the End of the World," Matt. xxviii. 20. i. e. "I am, and will be with you, and your Succeſſors, lawfully called by my Power and Authority, and by the Bleſſing and Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; I will be with you, to uphold my Ordinance, to protect, encourage, and reward you, and all your Succeſſors, in the faithful Diſcharge of your Truſt; and this not for a Day, a Year, or an Age, but even to the End and Conſummation of all Ages." From whence we may learn, that the Miniſtry of the World, and Adminiſtration of the Sacraments are a ſtanding and perpetual Ordinance, to continue in the Chriſtian Church, throughout all Ages; and that all the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt, in what Part of the World ſoever God ſhall caſt their Lot, and in what Time ſoever they ſhall happen to live, may comfortably expect Chriſt's gracious Preſence with their Perſons, and his Bleſſing upon their Labours.

Of all Places the Apoſtles would leaſt of all have choſen Jeruſalem to tarry in, had not our Lord poſitively commanded it there. For Jeruſalem was now a juſtly abhorred and deteſted Place, reeking freſh with the Blood of the holy and innocent Jeſus; and yet Jeruſalem is the Place, choſen by Chriſt, for the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon his Apoſtles, becauſe there was the greateſt Company of Spectators to behold this noble Work, and to be wrought upon by it; and becauſe there had been the Scenes of his greateſt Humiliation, and therefore, there he was minded to ſhew forth his Power and Glory.

The Reaſons, aſſignable for this wonderful

THE ASCENTION



wonderful Diſpenſation, the Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, are, 1ſt, To enable them to be powerful Witneſſes of our Lord's Reſurrection, Luke xxiv. 48. and conſequently, that he was the true Meſſiah, or the Prophet who was to be the Saviour of it: And therefore St. Peter ſpeaks thus to the Jews, "Ye have killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raiſed from the Dead, of which we are Witneſſes," Acts iii. 15. 2dly, To enable them to give an exact Account (as far as divine Wiſdom ſaw it neceſſary) of what our Saviour did, and taught; and therefore himſelf tells them, that "the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, ſhould teſtify of him, and bring all Things to their Remembrance which he had ſaid unto them," John xv. 26. xiv. 26. And 3dly, To make them able Miniſters of the New Teſtament, i. e. able to acquaint Chriſtians with all ſaving Truth, and to teach them all Things that he had commanded to be obſerved, throughout all the Ages of the Church; and upon the Strength of this Promiſe, all Chriſtians, in all Ages, have believed, that the Apoſtles and Writers of the New Teſtament, both ſpake and wrote as they were moved, or directed by the Spirit of God, and received thoſe Doctrines they taught, or indited, "not as the Word of Men, but, as they were in Truth, the Word of God," 1 Theſ. ii. 13.

Thus the Apoſtles preached in the moſt conſiderable Cities of the then known World; as at Antioch, Alexandria, and even at Rome itſelf, as well as at Jeruſalem and Samaria. They taught at Athens, and Corinth, and throughout all Greece, in ſuch Towns as were moſt learned, moſt corrupt, and moſt idolatrous. It was in the Preſence of all Nations, of Greeks and Barbarians, of the Learned and the Ignorant, of all Jews and Romans, of Princes and their People, that the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt gave Witneſs of the Wonders they had ſeen with their Eyes, heard with their Ears, and touched with their Hands, and particularly of their Lord's Reſurrection: Which Teſtimony they ſupported, without any Intereſt, and againſt all the Reaſons of human Prudence, even to their laſt Breath, and ſealed it with their Blood. Such was the Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity!

By Chriſt's lifting up his Hands, and giving them his Benediction, we learn, that the Cuſtom among the Jews was, to give the Benediction to a good Number, or Congregation of People, with an Elevation, and Extenſion of the Hands, as appears from the Practice of Aaron, Lev. ix. 22. But to any particular Perſon, the Bleſſing was given with the Impoſition of Hands, as the Example of Jacob, with regard to Ephraim and Manaſſeh, plainly ſhews, Gen. xlviii. 14.

The Aſcenſion of Chriſt into Heaven muſt be underſtood of his human Nature only, becauſe the divine Nature fills all Places, both in Heaven and Earth, and is, at all Times, incapable of that, which we properly call Motion. The ſame Body of Chriſt, therefore which was born, and ſuffered, and died, was actually carried up thither; and

and ſo our Saviour's Aſcenſion was no imaginary and figurative, but a real, proper, and bodily Aſcent into Heaven, and that, in the moſt elevated Part, and nobleſt Signification, that this Word, at any Time does, or can poſſibly admit.

" Sitting at the Right-hand of God," is one of thoſe Expreſſions, wherein the Holy Ghoſt condeſcends to our Capacity, by attributing to God the Parts and Geſture of an human Body. The Hand is the chief Inſtrument of exerting our Strength, and therefore often uſed to denote the Power of God. The Right-hand is the uſual Place of Honour and Reſpect, and therefore this denotes the higheſt Dignity. Sitting, in like Manner intimates a State of Eaſe, and is properly the Poſture of thoſe, that are in Power and Authority, of Kings upon their Thrones, and Magiſtrates in Courts of Juſtice; and therefore " Chriſt's ſitting at God's Right-hand" implies thus much,— That the ſame Bliſs, Glory and Power, which as the Son of God, he did, before his Incarnation, enjoy with his Father from all Eternity, his human Nature is now made Partaker of, in the higheſt Heavens. That this God-man is inveſted with an abſolute Authority, and boundleſs Dominion, and does now, in both Natures, rule, as he ſhall one Day judge, the whole World; and, till that Day come it is the Duty of us, and all Mankind, to reverence and obey, to truſt in, and pray to him, as our only Head and King, and our rightful and univerſal Lord.

THE

LIVES

OF THE

APOSTLES.

Saint PETER.

CHAP. I.

The Birth of St. Peter, and the Tranſactions of his Life before he became a Diſciple of the Bleſſed Jeſus.

ST. Peter was born at Bethſaida, a City of Galilee, ſituated on the Banks of the Lake of Gennaſereth, called alſo the Sea of Galilee, from its being ſituated in that Country; and the Lake of Tiberias from that City being built on its Banks. But the particular Time of this great Apoſtle's Birth cannot be known; the Evangeliſts and other Writers among the primitive Chriſtians having been ſilent with regard to this Particular. It is however pretty certain, that he was at leaſt ten Years older than his Maſter; the Circumſtances of his being married, and in a ſettled Courſe of Life, when he firſt became a Follower of the great Meſſiah, and that Authority and Reſpect the Gravity of his

his Perſon procured him among the reſt of the Apoſtles, ſufficiently declare this Conjecture to be very near the Truth.

As he was a Deſcendant of Abraham, he was circumciſed according to the Rites of the Moſaic Law, and called by his Parents Simon or Symeon, a Name common at that Time among the Jews. But after his becoming a Diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus, the additional Title of Cephas was conferred upon him by his Maſter, to denote the Firmneſs of his Faith; the Word Cephas in the Syriac, the common Language of the Jews at that Time, ſignifying a Stone or Rock; and thence he is called in Greek Petros, and by us Peter, which implies the ſame Thing,

With regard to the Parents of St. Peter, the Evangeliſts have alſo been ſilent, except in telling us that his Father's Name was Jonah, probably a Fiſherman of Bethſaida. But what ever his Trade was, he was highly honoured by our bleſſed Saviour, who choſe two of his Sons, Andrew and Peter, to be his Apoſtles, and Preachers of the glad Tidings of Salvation to the Children of Men.

St. Peter, in his youth, was brought up to the Trade of Fiſhing on the Lake of Bethſaida, famous for different Kinds of Fiſh, which excelled all others in the fineneſs of their Taſte.

Here St. Peter cloſely followed his Trade of Fiſhing: but afterwards removed to Capernaum, probably on his being married, where he ſettled; for we find he had a Houſe there when our Saviour began his publick Miniſtry, and there he paid Tribute. Nicephorus tells us that Helen, the Mother of Conſtantine, erected a beautiful Church over the Ruins of St. Peter's Houſe, in Honour of that Apoſtle.

Capernaum was as well ſituated as Bethſaida, for the carrying on of his Trade, ſtanding at the Influx of the Jordan into the Sea of Galilee, and where he might, with equal Advantage, reap the Fruits of an honeſt and induſtrious Diligence. The Buſineſs of St. Peter was, I confeſs, both mean and ſervile; it expoſed him to all the Injuries of the Weather, the Tempeſtuouſneſs of the Sea, and the Darkneſs and Horror of the Night, and all to acquire a mean Livelihood for himſelf and his Family. But Meanneſs is no Exception to the Almighty, the Poor, if Virtuous, are as dear to Heaven as the Wealthy, the Great, and the Powerful: the Beggar and the Monarch are equally regarded by the great Parent of the human Race, with whom there is no reſpect of Perſons.

And here I cannot help obſerving the wiſe and admirable Methods made uſe of by Divine Providence, in making choice of ſuch mean and unlikely Inſtruments in planting and propagating the Chriſtian Religion in the World. Men who were deſtitute of every Advantage of Education, and brought up to the meaneſt Employments, were choſen to confound the wiſe, and overturn the Learning of the prudent. Such were the Perſons whom the Almighty ſent to propagate the Religion of his Son; to Silence the Wiſe, the Scribe,

Scribe, and the Diſputer of this World, and to make fooliſh the Wiſdom of the Earth. For though the Jews required a Sign, and the Greeks ſought after Wiſdom; though the preaching of a crucified Saviour was a Scandal to the former, and fooliſhneſs to the learned latter; yet by this Fooliſhneſs of preaching, God was pleaſed to ſave them that believed: And in the Event made it appear, that "the Fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than Man, and the Weakneſs of God is ſtronger than Men." That ſo the Honour of all may redound to himſelf, "that no fleſh ſhould glory in his Preſence, but that he that glorieth ſhould glory in the Lord."

CHAP. II.

The Tranſactions of St. Peter from his firſt Coming to the great Meſſiah, till his being called to be a Diſciple.

THE Evangeliſts have not told us of what Sect St. Peter was before he became a Follower of the bleſſed Jeſus. But it is highly probably that he was a Diſciple of John the Baptiſt. We know that his Brother Andrew was a follower of that Preacher of Repentance; and it is very unlikely that he, who was ſo ready to carry his Brother the early Tidings of the Meſſiah, that the Sun of Righteouſneſs was already riſen in thoſe Parts, ſhould not be equally ſollicitous to bring him under the Diſcipline and Influences of John the Baptiſt, the Day-ſtar which appeared to uſher in the Appearance of the Son of God. Beſides, Peter's great Readineſs and Curioſity at the firſt News of Chriſt's appearing, to come to him and converſe with him, ſhews that his Expectations had been awakened, and ſome glimmerring Rays of Hope conveyed to him by the preaching and miniſtry of John, who was, "the Voice of one crying in the Wilderneſs, prepare the Way of the Lord, make his Paths ſtraight."

But however this be, whether Peter was or was not a Diſciple of John the Baptiſt, he became acquainted with the immaculate Lamb of God in the following Manner: The bleſſed Jeſus, having ſpent thirty Years in the Solitudes of a private Life, had lately been baptized by John in Jordan, and there owned by the ſolemn Atteſtation of Heaven to be the Son of God; whereupon he was immediately hurried into the Wilderneſs, and there for forty Days maintained a perſonal Conteſt with the Devil. But having conquered this great Enemy of Mankind, he returned to Bethabara beyond Jor-

dan, where John was baptizing his Proſelytes, and endeavouring to anſwer the Jews who had ſent a Deputation to him to enquire concerning this new Meſſiah that appeared among them. To ſatisfy theſe curious Enquirers of Iſrael, John faithfully related every Thing he knew concerning him, gave him the greateſt Character, and ſoon after pointed him out to his Diſciples; upon which two of them preſently followed the great Redeemer of Mankind, one of which was Andrew Simon's Brother. They came to him towards Evening, and in all Probability ſtayed with him the whole Night, during which Time Andrew had an Opportunity of informing himſelf, and of ſatisfying his moſt ſcrupulous Enquiries.

Nor did he conceal the joyful Diſcovery he had made; for early in the Morning he haſtened to acquaint his Brother Simon that he had found the Meſſiah. It is not enough to be happy alone; Religion is a communicative Principle, that like the Circles in the Water, delights to multiply itſelf, and to diffuſe its Influences all around, eſpecially on thoſe whom Nature has placed neareſt to us. I have, ſaid he, with Rapture to his Brother, found that eminent Perſon ſo long and ſignally foretold by the Prophets, and whom all the Devout and Pious among the Sons of Jacob ſo earneſtly expected.

Simon, who was one of thoſe who waited for Redemption in Iſrael, raviſhed with this joyful News, and impatient with Delay, preſently followed his Brother to the Place: And on his Arrival our bleſſed Saviour immediately gave him a Proof of his Divinity; ſaluting him at firſt Sight by his Name, and telling him both who he was, his Name and Kindred, and what Title ſhould ſoon be conferred upon him.

But whether theſe two Sons of Jonah conſtantly attended in Perſon from that Time on the great Redeemer of Mankind, and became his Diſciples, the ſacred hiſtory is Silent. It is however probable, that they ſtayed with him ſome Time, till they were inſtructed in the firſt Rudiments of his Doctrine; and then by the Leave of their great and benevolent Maſter returned to their Families and to their Callings; for it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the bleſſed Jeſus was not at this Time willing to awaken the Jealouſy of the Rulers of Iſrael, and the Suſpicion of the Romans, by a numerous Retinue, and therefore diſmiſſed his Diſciples, and among the Reſt Andrew and Peter, who returned to their Trade of fiſhing on the Lake, and where our bleſſed Redeemer afterwards found them.

The holy Jeſus had now more than a Year entered on his publick Miniſtry, going into every Part of the Country, to ſeek Opportunities of doing good to the Children of Men; ſo that by the Conſtancy of his Preaching, and the Reputation of his Miracles, his Fame was ſpread throughout all Judea; and Multitudes of People flocked to him from all Parts to hear his Doctrine, and be Spectators of his mighty Works. And ſurely it is no

Wonder

Wonder that the parched and barren Earth thirſted for the kindly Dews and Showers of Heaven.

But to avoid this prodigious Throng of People, our great Redeemer often retired to ſome ſolitary Place, to indulge the Privacies of Contemplation. In one of theſe Retreats on the Banks of the Sea of Galilee, the Multitudes found him out, and ran to him from the City. Our Saviour therefore, to avoid the Croud, ſtepped into a fiſhing-boat, which lay near the Shore, and belonged to Simon Peter, who, together with his Companions were on Shore, drying their Nets after an unſucceſsful Night ſpent in Toil and Labour. The bleſſed Jeſus, who might have commanded, was pleaſed to intreat Peter, who now returned to his Boat, to thruſt off a little from the Land, that he might inſtruct the People, who were gathered in prodigious Crowds on the Borders of the Lake.

Peter gladly complied with the Requeſt of his Maſter, who delivered his heavenly Doctrine to the People on the Shore. As ſoon as he had ended his Diſcourſe, he reſolved to ſeal his Miracle, that the People might be perſuaded he was a teacher from God. Accordingly he ordered Simon to row farther from the Shore, and caſt his Net into the Sea. To which Simon anſwered, that they had laboured the whole preceding Night and had taken nothing; and if they could not then ſucceed, there was little Hopes of it now, as the Day was far leſs proper for fiſhing than the Night. But as his Maſter was pleaſed to command, he would readily obey: and accordingly he let down his Net, when to the Aſtoniſhment both of him and his Companions, ſo great a Multitude of Fiſhes were incloſed, that they were obliged to call their Partners to their Aſſiſtance. Amazed at this miraculous Draught of Fiſhes, Simon Peter, in an Ecſtaſy of Admiration, blended with Awe and Humility, fell proſtrate at his Maſter's Feet, acknowledging himſelf a vile and ſinful Perſon, and thinking himſelf unworthy of being admitted into the Preſence of a Perſon ſo immediately ſent from God. But the compaſſionate Son of the Moſt High, kindly removed his Fears; telling him that this Miracle was wrought to confirm his Faith, and indicate to him that the Almighty had appointed a more noble Employment for him, that of ſaving the Souls of the Children of Men. From this Time Peter and his Companions became the inſeparable and conſtant Diſciples of the great Meſſiah, living under the Rules of his Diſcipline and Inſtitutions.

Soon after our bleſſed Saviour returned to Capernaum with his Diſciples, where they found the Mother-in-law of Peter dangerouſly ill of a Fever. But the Compaſſionate Jeſus, who never omitted an Opportunity of doing Good to the human Race, rebuked the Diſeaſe, and taking her by the Hand, reſtored her in a Moment to her former Health; demonſtrating at once his Power and Willingneſs to relieve the Sons and Daughters of Affliction.

CHAP. III.

The Tranſactions of St. Peter from his being elected one of the Twelve Apoſtles, till the laſt Paſſover of our Bleſſed Saviour.

OUR great Redeemer, having for ſome Time entered on his public Miniſtry, thought Proper to elect ſome peculiar Perſons from among his Followers, to be conſtant Witneſs of his Miracles and Doctrines, and who, after his Departure, might be intruſted with the Care of building his Church, and planting that Religion in the World for which he himſelf left the Manſions of Heaven, and put on the Veil of Mortality. In order to this, he withdrew privately in the Evening to a ſolitary Mountain, where he ſpent the Night in ſolemn Addreſſes to his Almighty Father, for rendering the great Work he was going to undertake proſperous and ſucceſsful.

Early the next Morning, the Diſciples came to him, out of whom he made Choice of Twelve to be his Apoſtles, and the conſtant Attendants on his Perſon. Theſe he afterwards inveſted with the Power of working Miracles, and ſent them into different Parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more Rapidity the great Work which he himſelf had ſo happily begun.

All the Evangeliſts in their Enumeration of theſe Apoſtles, conſtantly place St. Peter firſt. Indeed the Age and Gravity of his Perſon, together with his being firſt called to be an Apoſtle, particularly qualified him for being Preſident of this ſacred College. But we muſt not ſuppoſe that St. Peter was inveſted with any perſonal Prerogative above his Brethren; none of them ever intimated any ſuch Thing, and St. Paul ſays expreſsly, that he himſelf was not inferior to the very chiefeſt Apoſtle.

Soon after this Election, the bleſſed Jeſus, attended by Peter and the two Sons of Zebedee, followed Jairus, a Ruler of the Synagogue to his Houſe, in order to reſtore his Daughter, and only Child, who lay at the Point of Death; but before their Arrival, a Meſſenger arrived with the News that the Damſel was dead, and therefore unneceſſary for our Saviour to give himſelf any farther Trouble. But our bleſſed Saviour bid the Ruler not deſpair; for if he believed, his Daughter ſhould yet be reſtored to her former Health. And accordingly on his Arrival he took the Maid by the Hand, and with the Power of a Word recalled her fleeting Spirit, which had quitted its earthly Tabernacle, and reſtored her again to Life and Health.

We have no farther Account of St. Peter in particular, till the Night after our Saviour's miraculouſly feeding the Multitude in the Wilderneſs. Jeſus had ordered his Diſciples to take Ship and paſs over to the other Side, while he

ſent

ſent the Multitude away. But a violent Storm ariſing, they were in great Danger of their Lives, when their great Maſter came unto them walking on the Surface of the boiſterous Billows, with the ſame Eaſe as if it had been dry Ground. At his Approach the Diſciples were greatly terrified, ſuppoſing they had ſeen a Spirit. But their compaſſionate Maſter ſoon diſpelled their Fears, by telling them it was he himſelf; and therefore they had no Reaſon to be terrified. Peter, who was always remarkable for bold Reſolutions, deſired his Maſter to give him Leave to come to him on the Water; and on obtaining Permiſſion, he left the Ship, and walked on the Sea, to meet his Saviour. But when he heard the deep Roar around him, and the Waves increaſe, he began to be afraid; and as his Faith declined, his Body ſunk in the Water; ſo that, in the greateſt Agony he called for Aſſiſtance to him who was able to ſave. Nor was his Cry in vain; the compaſſionate Redeemer of Mankind ſtretched out his hand, and again placed him on the Surface of the Water, with this gentle Reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?" And no ſooner was the bleſſed Jeſus and his Diſciples entered into the Ship, than the Winds ceaſed, the Waves ſubſided, and the Ship was at the Land whither they were going. A Miracle of this Kind could not fail of aſtoniſhing the Diſciples, and convincing them of the Divinity of his Perſon; accordingly they drew near, and worſhipped him with this Confeſſion, "Of a Truth thou art the Son of God."

The next Day our bleſſed Saviour entered the Synagogue of Capernaum; and, from the Miracle of the Loaves, took Occaſion to diſcourſe concerning himſelf, as the true Manna, and the Bread which came down from Heaven; opening to them the more ſublime and ſpiritual Myſteries, and the neceſſary and important Duties of the Goſpel. On which great Part of the Audience, who expected he was going to erect a temporal Kingdom, and reeſtabliſh the Throne of David in Jeruſalem, offended at his repreſenting his Dominion as entirely ſpiritual, departed from him, and came no more to hear his Diſcourſes. Jeſus, on beholding this Defection, turned himſelf towards his Diſciples, and aſked them whether they alſo would go away? To which Peter replied, "Lord, whither ſhall we go? thou haſt the Words of eternal Life." Thy Doctrine alone can inſtruct us in the Paths that lead to Happineſs; and thou art the true Meſſiah, the great Prophet, ſo fully foretold, and ſo long expected.

The Inhabitants of Judea, who beheld with Aſtoniſhment the Miracles wrought by the Bleſſed Jeſus, had formed many Conjectures concerning him. Our great Redeemer was not ignorant of this; but being willing to hear what Account his Diſciples would give him of the various Opinions of the People, aſked them, what the World ſaid concerning them? To which they replied, that ſome took him for John the Baptiſt riſen from the Dead; ſome thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the

the old Prophets. This Account not ſatisfying our Bleſſed Saviour, he told them that it was no Wonder that the People, who had ſeldom ſeen him, ſhould form various Conjectures concerning him and the Doctrines he preached; but as they had been conſtantly with him, heard his Sermons, and been Spectators of his Miracles, it was natural to think they might form a truer Idea of him; and therefore, aſked them what they themſelves thought of him? To which Peter, in the Name of the reſt, anſwered, "Thou art Chriſt, the Son of the living God," anointed and ſet apart by the moſt High to be the great King, Prieſt, and Prophet of Iſrael. This full and comprehenſive Declaration of Peter, ſatisfied the Enquiry of our Bleſſed Saviour, who anſwered, "Bleſſed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah; for Fleſh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in Heaven." That is, this Faith which thou haſt now confeſſed is not human, or built upon the Teſtimony of Man, but upon thoſe Notions and Principles which I was ſent from God to reveal unto the World, and thoſe great and ſolemn Atteſtations he hath given from Heaven to the Truth both of my Perſon and Doctrine. Therefore, I "ſay alſo unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it." As thy Name ſignifies a Rock, ſo ſhalt thou prove firm, ſolid, and immoveable in building my Church, which ſhall be ſo firmly eſtabliſhed by thy Care and Diligence upon that Faith thou haſt now profeſſed, that all the Aſſaults of Men and Devils ſhall not be able to deſtroy it.

The Diſciples had no Idea that their Maſter was to ſuffer Death for the Sins of the World; on the contrary, they conſidered him as immortal, having imbibed the Opinion of the Scribes and Phariſees, that Chriſt abideth for ever: So that when the bleſſed Jeſus told them of the Sufferings he muſt undergo at Jeruſalem, what Affronts and Indignities he muſt ſuffer, and be at laſt put to Death with all the acts of Torture and Diſgrace by a Sentence of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, Peter, who could not endure the thought of his Maſter's ſuffering even the leaſt Puniſhment, much leſs thoſe Cruelties he had mentioned and at laſt Death itſelf, interrupted him very unſeaſonably, and ſaid, "Be it far from thee Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee." He conſidered theſe Sufferings as inconſiſtent with the Character of the great Meſſiah, whom he expected would reſtore the Splendor of the Throne of David his Father, and reduce all the Kingdoms of the Earth to his Obedience. But our Bleſſed Saviour, who came down from Heaven to give his Life a Ranſom for the Sins of the World, and who valued the Redemption of Mankind infinitely more than his own eaſe and ſafety, highly reſented this Speech of St. Peter, and accordingly returned this ſharp Reproof, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence to me. Thy pernicious Councel in ſeeking to oppoſe the Deſign for which I purpoſely left the Courts of Heaven is offenſive;

ſive; and thou favoureſt not the Things of God, but thoſe that be of Men.

Some Time after the great Redeemer of the Sons of Men, being to receive a Specimen of his future Glorification, took with him the three moſt intimate of his Apoſtles, Peter and the two Sons of Zebedee, and went up into a very high Mountain; and while they were employed in earneſt Addreſſes to the Almighty, he was transfigured before them, darting ſuch luſtre from his Face, as exceeded the meridian Rays of the Sun in Brightneſs; and ſuch beams of Light iſſued from his Garments, as exceeded the Light of the cleareſt Day; an evident and ſenſible Repreſentation of that State, when "the juſt ſhall walk in white Robes, and ſhine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father." During this heavenly Scene, the great Prophets Moſes and Elias appeared in all the Brightneſs and Majeſty of a glorified State, familiarly converſing with him, and diſcourſing of the Death and Sufferings he was ſhortly to undergo, and his Aſcenſion to the heavenly Regions of Bliſs and Happineſs.

In the mean Time Peter and the two Apoſtles were fallen aſleep, being either very heavy for want of natural reſt, or overpowered by theſe extraordinary Appearances, which the frailty and weakneſs of their Nature could not ſupport, were fallen into a Trance. But on their awaking were ſtrangely ſurpriſed to ſee their Lord ſurrounded with ſo much Glory, and thoſe two great Perſons converſing with him. They however remained ſilent till thoſe Viſitants from the Courts of Heaven were going to depart, when Peter, in a Rapture and Ecſtaſy of Mind, addreſſed himſelf to his Maſter, declaring their infinite Pleaſure and Delight in being favoured with this glorious Spectacle; and deſired his Leave to erect three Tabernacles, one for him, and one for Moſes, and one for Elias. But while he was ſpeaking a bright Cloud ſuddenly overſhadowed thoſe two great Prophets, and a Voice came from it, uttering theſe remarkable Words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed, hear ye him." On which the Apoſtles were ſeized with the utmoſt Conſternation, and fell upon their Faces to the Ground; but Jeſus touching them, bid them diſmiſs their Fears and look up with Confidence. They immediately obeyed, but ſaw their Maſter only; the others having vaniſhed together with the Cloud of Light.

After this heavenly Scene, our bleſſed Saviour travelled through Galilee with his Apoſtles, and at his Return to Capernaum, the Tax-gatherers came to Peter, and aſked him, whether his Maſter was not obliged to pay the Tribute. To which Peter readily declared he was. On his entering the Houſe to give his Maſter an Account of this Demand, Jeſus prevented him, by aſking "What thinkeſt thou, Simon? of whom do the Kings of the Earth take Cuſtom or Tribute? of their own Children or of Strangers?" To which Peter anſwered, not from their Servants and Family, but from Strangers. Then, replied our Lord, are the Children free. I myſelf

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as being the Son of God, and you as my Servants are free from this Tax yearly paid to God, for repairing his Temple at Jeruſalem. But rather than give Offence, by ſeeming to deſpiſe the Houſe of God, and unvalue that Authority which had ſettled this Tribute, he determined to pay it, though at the Expence of a Miracle. Accordingly, he ordered Peter to repair to the Sea with a Hook, and take the firſt Fiſh that offered, in whoſe Mouth he ſhould find a Piece of Money. The Diſciple obeyed, and found the Money as his Maſter had foretold, and gave it to the Gatherers of the Tribute for his Maſter and himſelf.

Our Bleſſed Saviour was now going for the laſt Time to Jeruſalem; and that all the Scriptures concerning him might be fulfilled, he ordered two of his Diſciples, probable Peter and John, to fetch him an Aſs that he might enter the City on it as the Prophet had foretold, "Tell ye the Daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek and ſitting upon an Aſs, and a Colt the Fole of an Aſs." The Diſciples obeyed their Maſter, and brought the Aſs to Jeſus, who being mounted thereon, he entered the City amidſt the Hoſannahs of a numerous Multitude with Palm-branches in their Hands, ſome ſpreading their Garments in the Way, and others ſtrewing it with Branches of Trees, proclaiming at once both the Majeſty of a Prince, and the Triumph of a Saviour.

CHAP. IV.

The Tranſactions of St. Peter from the laſt Paſſover to the Death of our Bleſſed Saviour.

THE great Redeemer of Mankind having now entered the City of Jeruſalem in Triumph, repaired to Bethany; from whence he ſent two of his Diſciples, Peter and John, to make Preparations for his celebrating the Paſſover.

Every thing being ready, our Bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles entered the Houſe, and ſat down to Table. But their great Maſter, who often taught them by Example as well as Precept, aroſe from his Seat, laid aſide his Upper Garment, took the Towel, and pouring Water into a Baſon, began to waſh his Diſciples Feet, to teach them Humility and Charity by his own Example. But on his coming to Peter, he would by no Means admit his Maſter to perform ſo mean and condeſcending an Office. What! the Son of God ſtoop to waſh the Feet of a ſinful Mortal! A Thought which ſhocked the Apoſtle, who ſtrenuouſly declared, Thou ſhalt

ſhalt never waſh my Feet. But the Bleſſed Jeſus told him, that if he waſhed him not, he could have no part with him; inſinuating that this Action was myſtical, and ſignified the remiſſion of Sins, and the purifying Virtue of the Spirit of the moſt High, to be poured upon all true Chriſtians. This Anſwer ſufficiently removed the Scruples of Peter, who cried out, Lord, not my Feet only but alſo my Hands and my Head. Waſh me in every part, rather than let me loſe my Portion in thee.

The Bleſſed Jeſus, having ſet them this pattern of Humility, began to reflect on his approaching Sufferings, and on the Perſon who ſhould betray him into the Hands of wicked and cruel Men, telling them that not a Stranger or an Enemy, but one of his Friends, one of his Apoſtles, and even one of them who then ſat at Table with him would betray him. This Declaration exceedingly affected them all in general, and Peter in particular, who made ſigns to St. John, then lying on the Boſom of his beloved Maſter, to aſk him particularly who it was? Jeſus complied with this Requeſt, and gave them to underſtand that it was Judas Iſcariot.

Our great Redeemer now began the Inſtitution of his Supper, that great and ſolemn Inſtitution, which he reſolved to leave behind him, to be conſtantly celebrated in his Church, as a ſtanding Monument of his Love in dying for Mankind; telling them at the ſame Time, that he himſelf was now going to leave them, and that "whither he went they could not come." Peter, not well underſtanding what he meant, aſked him whither he was going? To which our great Redeemer replied, that he was going to that Place, whither he could not now but ſhould hereafter follow him: intimating the Martyrdom he was to ſuffer for his Maſter's Religion. Peter anſwered, that he was ready now to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his Life. This confident Preſumption was not at all agreeable to the Bleſſed Jeſus, who told him he had promiſed great Things, but would be ſo far from performing them, that before the Cock crew twice, that is before three in the Morning, he would thrice deny his Maſter.

Supper being now ended they ſung an Hymn, and departed to the Mount of Olives; where Jeſus again put them in Mind how greatly the Things he was going to ſuffer would offend them. To which Peter replied, that "though all Men ſhould be offended becauſe of him, yet he himſelf would never be offended," How far will an indiſcreet Zeal and Affection tranſport even a good Man into Vanity and Preſumption! Peter queſtions the Fidelity of others, but never doubts his own; though his Lord had juſt before reproved him for his ſelf-ſufficiency. This Confidence of Peter inſpired the reſt of the Apoſtles with Courage; ſo that they declared their conſtant and unſhaken adherence to their Maſter. But our Bleſſed Saviour, who well knew the frailty of human Nature,

anſwered Peter in the ſame Manner he had done before, when he was celebrating his laſt Supper.

They now repaired to the Garden of Gethſemane; and leaving the reſt of the Apoſtles near the Entrance, our Bleſſed Saviour taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the more ſolitary Parts of the Garden, to enter on the preparatory Scene of the great Tragedy that was now approaching.

Here the Bleſſed Jeſus laboured under the bittereſt Agony that ever human Nature ſuffered, during which he prayed with the utmoſt fervency to his Almighty Father, "offering up Prayers and Supplications, with ſtrong Cryings and Tears; and his Sweat was as it were great Drops of Blood falling down to the Ground." While our great Redeemer was thus interceding with the Almighty, his three Diſciples were fallen aſleep, though he had made three ſeveral Viſits to them, and calling to Peter, aſked him, if he could not watch one Hour with him? adviſing them all to watch and pray, that they might not enter into Temptation, adding, "The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Fleſh is Weak.

What incomparable Sweetneſs! what generous Candour did the great Redeemer of the World diſplay on this Occaſion! He paſſed the moſt charitable cenſure upon an Action, which Malice and Ill-nature would have painted in Colours as black as the Shades of Darkneſs. How reaſonable was the Requeſt made by their great Maſter! He only deſired them to watch with him during his bitter Agony; and this but for a ſmall Time, a ſingle Hour; it would ſoon be over, and then they might freely conſult their own Eaſe and Safety. It was their dear Lord and Maſter that made this Requeſt, who was going to lay down his Life for them, was now ſweating under the Prelude of his Sufferings, and expecting every Moment the whole Powers of Darkneſs to fall upon him. But all theſe Conſiderations were drowned in a profound Security, the Diſciples were buried in a deep Sleep, and though often awaked and informed of the approaching Tragedy, they little regarded the Admonitions, as if nothing but Eaſe and Softneſs engaged their Thoughts: an Action which ſeemed to imply the moſt amazing Ingratitude, and the higheſt Diſregard for their Lord and Maſter. But he who was compaſſion itſelf would not impute it to their Want of Affection, or a Diſregard for his Safety: he conſidered it merely as the Effect of their Infirmities, and made an Excuſe for them when they could make none for themſelves; teaching us the uſeful Leſſon of putting the moſt favourable Conſtruction on the Actions of others; and to imitate the Bee and not the Spider, by ſucking Honey, inſtead of Poiſon, from the various Tranſactions of human Life.

While he was diſcourſing with them, a Band of Soldiers from the Chief-Prieſts and Elders, preceded by the Traitor Judas to conduct and direct them,

them, ruſhed into the Garden, and ſeized the great High-prieſt of our Profeſſion. Peter, whoſe ungovernable Zeal would admit of no Reſtraint, drew his Sword, and, without the leaſt Order from his Maſter, ſtruck at one of the Perſons who ſeemed to be remarkably buſy in binding Jeſus, and cut off his right Ear. This wild and unwarrantable Zeal was very offenſive to his Maſter, who rebuked Peter, and intreated the Patience of the Soldiers, while he miraculouſly healed the Wound.

But now the fidelity of the Apoſtles which they had urged with ſo much Confidence, was put to the Trial. They ſaw their Maſter in the Hands of a rude and inconſiderate Band of Men; and therefore ſhould have exerted their Power to releaſe him, or at leaſt have been the Companions of his Sufferings, and endeavoured, by every kind and endearing Action, to have leſſened his Grief. But alas! inſtead of aſſiſting or comforting their Maſter, they all forſook him and fled.

The Soldiers who had bound Jeſus led him away, and delivered him to the Chief Prieſts and Elders, who carried him from one Tribunal to another; firſt to Annas and then to Caiphas, where the Jewiſh Sanhedrim was aſſembled, in Order to try and condemn him.

In the mean Time, Peter, who had followed the other Diſciples in their Flight, recovered his Spirits, and, being encouraged by his Companion St. John, returned to ſeek his Maſter; and ſeeing him leading to the High-prieſt's Hall, followed at a Diſtance to know the Event; but on his Coming to the Door was refuſed Admittance, till one of the Diſciples, probably St. John, who was acquainted there, came out, and prevailed upon the Servant who kept the Door to let him in. Peter, being admitted, repaired to the Fire burning in the middle of the Hall, round which the Officers and Servants were ſtanding; where being obſerved by the Maid-ſervant who let him in, ſhe charged him with being one of Chriſt's Diſciples; but Peter publickly denied the Charge, declaring that he did not know him, and preſently withdrew into the Porch, where he heard the Cock crow: an intimation ſeemingly ſufficient to have awakened his Conſcience into a quick Senſe of his Duty, and the Promiſe he had a few Hours before made to his Maſter. But alas! human Nature, when left to itſelf, is remarkably Frail and Inconſtant. This Peter ſufficiently experienced; for while he continued in the Porch, another Maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of Jeſus of Nazareth: which Peter firmly denied, and, the better to gain belief, ratified it with an Oath.

About an Hour after this, the Servant of the High-prieſt, he whoſe Ear Peter had cut off, charged him with being a Diſciple of Chriſt, and that he himſelf had ſeen him in the Garden with him; adding that his very Speech ſufficiently proved that he was a Galilean. Peter however ſtill denied the Fact; and to add the higheſt

Accompliſhment to his Sin, ratified it, not only by an Oath, but a ſolemn Curſe and Execration, that he was not the Perſon, that he knew not the Man. But no ſooner had he uttered this Denial, than the Cock crew. At which his Maſter turned about, and earneſtly looked upon him: a look that pierced him to the Heart, and brought to his Remembrance what his Saviour had more than once foretold, that he would baſely and ſhamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his Sorrow; he flew from the Palace of the High-prieſt, and wept bitterly, paſſionately bewailing his Folly, and the Aggravations of his Sin; endeavouring thereby to make ſome Reparation for his Fault, recover the Favour of Heaven, and prevent the Execution of Divine Juſtice, by taking a ſevere Revenge upon himſelf,

This Fall of St. Peter ſhould convince us of the miſerable Frailty even of the beſt of Men, and effectually ſubdue thoſe vain Confidences which are apt to riſe in our Hearts from our own ſuppoſed Strength and Virtue. For as this great Diſciple fell in ſo ſcandalous a Manner, who ſhall hereafter dare to depend upon the higheſt Degree of Knowledge, when one ſo wiſe, ſo perfectly ſatisfied of the Truth of the Chriſtian Doctrine, was, after the fulleſt Convictions of his own Conſcience, ſo weak and Frail as to deny and abjure his Lord who inſtructed and bought him, even at the Price of his own Blood? Who ſhall preſume upon his beſt Reſolutions, when he who declared ſo firm a Purpoſe of adhering to Jeſus, did within a few Hours peremptorily and ſolemnly diſown that very Perſon for whoſe Sake he was lately ready and diſpoſed to lay down his Life? There is, indeed, no Reaſon to doubt that St. Peter at that Time ſpoke the very Senſe of his Soul: that he had an honeſt and ſincere Heart, was ſtedfaſtly determined, and, as he thought, able to perform what, with ſo much Piety and Affection, he intended and profeſſed. But his Misfortune was, that he did not conſider the Infirmities of human Nature, promiſing, in the warmth of his Zeal, more than he was able to perform. He relied on his own Integrity, thinking good Reſolutions a ſufficient Defence againſt the moſt violent Temptations. But when the Aſſault was made, and Danger with her terrifying Aſpect appeared, the Event ſufficiently proved, that how willing ſoever the Spirit might be, yet the Fleſh was at beſt exceeding frail and weak. And if this great Champion of the Chriſtian Cauſe ſo ſoon gave Ground, how ſhall we be able to engage in the ſpiritual Combat? Who of us would reſolve to die with Chriſt rather than deny him? and yet the moſt ſerious and ſincerely reſolved may fail in the Time of Trouble. We have in St. Peter a ſad Experiment for our Inſtruction. The Opinion of his own Strength proved his ruin. So dangerous and fatal is it to lean on our own Underſtanding; to be wiſe, good, and ſafe in our own Conceits; when all our ſufficiency, all our ſafety is of God.

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We ſhould alſo, from this Example, remember the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Almighty, in cauſing the Faults and Infirmities of his Saints to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and the Uſe we ought to make of their Failings and Temptations. Their eminent Virtues, and their eminent Repentance where they did amiſs, are written as a ſeaſonable Warning, and exhibit an Inſtance of Humiliation to all future Ages; by letting us ſee, that the moſt perfect are but Men, ſubject to Blemiſhes and Imperfections; and that the higheſt and pureſt State is no Security from Danger. This ſhould make us very tender how we judge and deſpiſe our Brethren; whoſe Faults, however ſeverely we may cenſure them, might probably have been our own, had we been in their Circumſtances, and ſurrounded with their temptations. For "let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take Heed Leſt he fall." We ſhould not then promiſe ourſelves Safety and Freedom from Temptations in any Circumſtances of Life; or ſo far preſume on our own Virtues, as to think we are incapable of committing the blackeſt Crimes, ſhould the Almighty withdraw his Grace, and leave us to ourſelves. The Example of ſuch Worthies ſhould awaken our Care, mortify our Vanity, and remind us of our Dependance upon an higher Power, and to give him the Acknowledgements due for all the Good we do, and for not falling into Evil.

And as their Failings admoniſh, ſo they alſo ſhould comfort us, by demonſtrating that God does not ſuddenly caſt off his Servants when they have heinouſly offended him: That we ought not to deſpair, tho' our Tranſgreſſions are great and many; for if we will return and make Amends for our paſt Offences, we ſhall be kindly received, and freely pardoned. But St. Peter's Fall will afford no juſt Ground of Comfort to any but ſuch as are careful to riſe again with him. As his Sin is a Warning, ſo is his Repentance. They who blame his Sin, ſhould remember his Sorrow; and if they abhor the one, let them ſtrive to imitate the other.

C H A P. V.

The Tranſactions of St. Peter, from the Reſurrection to the Aſcenſion, of our great Redeemer.

WHETHER St. Peter, after his Denial of his Maſter, retired into ſome ſolitary Place, to give Vent to his Grief and indulge his Tears, or whether he followed his Saviour thro' the ſeveral Stages of his Trial, and perſonally attended as a Mourner at the Funeral of his Maſter, we have no Account. But however that be, he ſtayed at Jeruſalem, or at leaſt in the Neighbourhood

bourhood, and probably with St. John; for when Mary Magdalene returned from the Sepulchre, to inform the Diſciples that the Stone was rolled away from the door, and the Body not to be found, Peter and John ſet out immediately towards the Garden. John, who was the younger, arrived firſt at the Sepulchre, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of Fear, or a Reverence to his Saviour. Peter, whoſe Zeal was greatly increaſed, came ſoon after, and reſolutely went into the Sepulchre, where he found the Linen Clothes lying together in one Place, and the Napkin that was about his Head wrapped together in another: ſufficient Indication that the Body was not ſtolen away; for had that been the Caſe, ſo much Care and Order would not have been obſerved in diſpoſing of the Linen Clothes.

But Peter did not wait long in Suſpence with regard to his great Lord and Maſter; for the ſame Day, and probably about Noon, Jeſus appeared to him; perhaps in Compaſſion to his Sorrow, in which he was overwhelmed for his late ſhameful Denial of his Maſter. And as he was the Firſt of the Diſciples who had made a ſignal Confeſſion of the Divinity of the Meſſiah, ſo it was reaſonable he ſhould firſt ſee him after his Reſurrection: And at the ſame Time to convince him that the Crime he had been guilty of in denying him was pardoned, and that he was come, like the good Samaritan, to pour Oil into his wounded Conſcience.

Soon after the Apoſtles prepared to obey the Command of their great Maſter, of retiring into Galilee; and we find that Peter, Nathaniel, the two Sons of Zebedee, and two other Diſciples, returned to their old Trade of fiſhing on the Lake. One Morning early as they were labouring at their Employment, having ſpent the whole Night to no Purpoſe, they ſaw on the Shore a grave Perſon, perhaps in the Habit of a Traveller, who called to them and aſked them if they had any Meat; to which they anſwered, No. Caſt then, replied he, the Net on the Right Side of the Ship, and ye ſhall find. They followed his Directions and incloſed a prodigious Number of large Fiſh. Aſtoniſhed at ſuch remarkable Succeſs, the Diſciples looked one upon another for ſome Time, till St. John told Peter, that the Perſon on the Shore was doubtleſs their great Lord and Maſter, whom the Winds, the Sea, and the Inhabitants of the watery Region were ſo ready to obey.

Peter no ſooner heard the beloved Diſciple declare his Opinion concerning the Stranger, than his Zeal took fire, and, notwithſtanding the Coldneſs of the Seaſon, girt on his Fiſher's Coat, threw himſelf into the Sea, and ſwam to Shore; his Impatience to be with his dear Lord and Maſter, not ſuffering him to ſtay the few Minutes neceſſary to bring the Ship to Land.

As ſoon as the Diſciples came on Shore, they found a Fire kindled, and Fiſh laid upon it, either immediately created by the Power of their Divine Maſter, or which came aſhore of their own Accord, & offered themſelves to his Hand. But notwithſtanding there were

Fiſh

Fiſh already on the Fire, he ordered them to bring of thoſe they had now caught, and dreſs them for their repaſt, he himſelf eating with them; both to give them an inſtance of mutual Love and Friendſhip, and alſo to aſſure them of the Truth of his human Nature, ſince he was riſen from the Dead.

When the Repaſt was ended, our Bleſſed Saviour addreſſed himſelf particularly to Peter, urging him to the utmoſt Diligence in his Care of Souls: and becauſe he knew that nothing but a ſincere Love to himſelf could ſupport him under the Troubles and Dangers of ſo laborious and difficult an Employment, he enquired of him whether he loved him more than the reſt of the Apoſtles; mildly reproving him for his over confident Reſolution. Peter, whom fatal Experience had taught Humility, modeſtly anſwered, that none knew ſo well as himſelf the Integrity of his Affections. Thou knoweſt the Hearts of all Men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knoweſt that I love thee. The Queſtion was three ſeveral Times repeated by our Bleſſed Saviour, and as often-times anſwered by the Apoſtle; it being but juſt that he, who by a threefold Denial had given ſo much Reaſon to Queſtion his Affection, ſhould now, by a threefold Confeſſion, give more than common Aſſurance of his ſincere Love for his Maſter; and to each of theſe Confeſſions our great Redeemer added this ſignal Trial of his Affection, Feed my ſheep. Inſtruct and teach them with the utmoſt Care, and the utmoſt Tenderneſs.

The Bleſſed Jeſus having thus engaged Peter to a chearful Compliance with the Dangers that might attend the Diſcharge of his Office, particularly intimated to him the Fate that would attend him; telling him, that when he was young, he girt himſelf, lived at his Pleaſure, and went wherever his Fancy directed him; but when he ſhould reach the Term of old Age, he ſhould ſtretch forth his Hands, and another ſhould gird and bind him, and lead him whither he had no Deſire to go, intimating, as the Evangeliſt tells us, "by what Death he ſhould glorify God."

Peter was well pleaſed to drink the bitter Cup, and make his Confeſſion as public as his Denial, providing all would be ſufficient to atone for his former Sin. And ſeeing John following, he asked his great Maſter what ſhould be his Fate, and whether he who had been the Object of his Maſter's Love in his Life-time, ſhould not have as honourable a Death as he that had denied him? To which Jeſus replied, it doth not Concern thee to know how I ſhall diſpoſe of Events with regard to him; he ſhall ſee the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh Nation, and then go down to the Chambers of the Duſt in Peace.

Not long after our Bleſſed Saviour appeared to his Diſciples at Jeruſalem, to take his laſt Farewel of them, who had conſtantly attended him during his public Miniſtry among the Sons of Men.

He now led them out as far as Bethany, a ſmall Village on Mount Olivet,

vet, where he briefly told them, that they were the Perſons he had choſen to be the Witneſſes both of his Death and Reſurrection; a Teſtimony which they ſhould publiſh in every Part of the World. In order to which, he would, after his Aſcenſion into Heaven, pour out his Spirit upon them in an extraordinary Manner, that they might be the better enabled to ſtruggle with that violent Rage and Fury with which the Doctrine of the Goſpel would be oppoſed by Men and Devils. Adding, that in the mean Time they ſhould return to Jeruſalem, and there wait till thoſe miraculous Powers were given them from on high.

Having finiſhed this Diſcourſe, he layed Hands upon them, and gave them his ſolemn Benediction; during which he was taken from them, and received up into the Regions of the heavenly Canaan. The Apoſtles who beheld their Maſter viſibly aſcend into Heaven, were filled with a greater Senſe of his Glory than they had ever been while he converſed with them familiarly on Earth. And having performed their ſolemn Adorations to him they returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy, there to wait for the Accompliſhment of their great Maſter's Promiſe. How ſudden a Change was now wrought in the Minds of the Apoſtles! They who were lately overwhelmed with Sorrow at the very Mention of their Lord's Departure from them, beheld it now with Joy and triumph; they were fully ſatisfied of his glorious Advancement to the Right Hand of Omnipotence, and of that peculiar Care and Providence which they were ſure he would exerciſe over them, in purſuance of thoſe great Truſts he had committed to their Care.

CHAP. VI.

The Tranſactions of St. Peter, from the Aſcenſion of the Bleſſed Jeſus till the Diſperſion of the Church at Jeruſalem.

THE immaculate Lamb of God having left this Vale of Miſery, and aſcended into the bliſsful Habitations of Immortality, the Apoſtles began to Act in Conformity to the Power and Commiſſion they had received from him. The firſt Object that engaged their Attention after their Return to Jeruſalem, was to fill up the Vacancy in their College, lately made by the unhappy Fall and Apoſtacy of Judas. In order to this they called together the Church, and entered into an upper Room, poſſibly that where our Bleſſed Saviour had lately kept the Paſſover, when Peter, as Preſident of the Aſſembly,

bly, propoſed to them the Choice of a new Apoſtle. He put them in mind that Judas, one of the Diſciples of their great and beloved Maſter, being betrayed by his covetous and inſatiable Temper, had lately fallen from the Honour of his Place and Miniſtry. That this was no more than what the Prophet had long ſince foretold ſhould come to paſs; and that the Care of the Church which had been committed to him, ſhould devolve upon another; that therefore it was highly neceſſary that the ſame Perſon who had been familiarly converſant with the Bleſſed Jeſus, from firſt to laſt, and conſequently, a competent Witneſs both of his Doctrine and Miracles, his Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion, ſhould be ſubſtituted in his room.

This indeed was highly requiſite; for as no Witneſs is ſo valid and ſatisfactory as the Teſtimony of an Eye-witneſs, as the Apoſtles all along principally inſiſted on this, that they delivered nothing to the World, concerning the great Redeemer of Mankind than what they themſelves had ſeen and heard, and as his riſing from the Dead was a Principle likely to meet with the greateſt Oppoſition, and which would be the moſt difficult Tenet of the Goſpel to be believed by the Sons of men, they urged this great Truth inceſſantly, declaring that they were Eye-witneſſes of his Reſurrection, that they had ſeen and felt him; eaten and familiarly converſed with him, after his Return from the Chambers of the Grave. It was therefore highly requiſite that ſuch an Apoſtle ſhould be choſen; and accordingly two Candidates were propoſed; Joſeph, called Barſabas, and Matthias, both qualified for the great and important Office of the Apoſtleſhip. And having prayed that the Divine Providence would immediately guide and direct their Choice, they caſt Lots, and the Lot fell upon Matthias, who was accordingly admitted into the Number of the twelve Apoſtles.

After filling up this Vacancy in the Apoſtolick College, they ſpent their Time, in Prayer and Meditation, till the Feaſt of Pentecoſt; when the Promiſe of their great Maſter in ſending the Holy Ghoſt was fulfilled. The Chriſtian Aſſembly were met as uſual, to perform the publick Services of their Worſhip, when ſuddenly a Sound, like that of a mighty Wind, ruſhed in upon them; repreſenting the powerful Efficacy of that divine Spirit which was now to be communicated to them. After which there appeared ſmall Flames of Fire, which in the Shape of Cloven Tongues, deſcended, and ſat upon the Head of each of them, to denote that their Enjoyment of this Gift ſhould be conſtant and perpetual; and not like the Prophets of old, who were inſpired only at ſome particular Times and Seaſons. Upon which they were all immediately filled with the Holy Ghoſt, which in an Inſtant, enabled them to ſpeak fluently ſeveral Languages they had never learned, and probably never heard.

The Report of ſo ſudden and ſtrange an Action was ſoon ſpread through every Part of Jeruſalem, which at that

Time was full of Jewiſh Proſelytes, "devout Men out of every Nation under Heaven, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the Dwellers in Meſopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Aſia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, the Parts of Lybia and Cyrene, from Rome, from Crete, and from Arabia." Theſe no ſooner heard of this miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Spirit, than they flocked in prodigious Numbers to this Chriſtian Aſſembly, where they were amazed to hear theſe Galileans ſpeaking to them in their own native Language, ſo various, and ſo different from one another. And it could not fail of exceedingly increaſing the Wonder, to reflect on the Meanneſs of the Speakers, who were neither aſſiſted by Genius, poliſhed by Education, nor improved by Uſe and Cuſtom. The Diſciples were deſtitute of all theſe Aſſiſtances; their Parts were mean, their Education trifling, and their Experience in ſpeaking before great Aſſemblies, nothing. Yet theſe Perſons ſpoke boldly, and with the greateſt Propriety, in various Languages. Nor were their Diſcourſes filled with idle Stories, or the Sallies of a luxuriant Fancy. No, they expatiated on the great and admirable Works of Omnipotence, and the Myſteries of the Goſpel, which human Apprehenſions could never diſcover.

This ſurprizing Tranſaction had different Effects on the Minds of the Audience; ſome conſidering it as the Effect of a Miracle, and others as the Power and Strength of new Wine.

Upon which the Apoſtles all ſtood up, and, Peter, in the Name of the reſt, undertook to confute this injurious Calumny. He told them that this ſcandalous Slander proceeded from the Spirit of Malice and Falſhood; that their Cenſure was as uncharitable as it was unjuſt; that it was early in the Morning, and therefore not a Time for Drinking, eſpecially on a Day ſet apart for Devotion; that theſe extraordinary and miraculous Effects were but the Accompliſhment of an ancient Prophecy, which the Almighty had expreſsly declared ſhould be fulfilled in the Times of the Meſſiah; that Jeſus of Nazareth had evidently proved himſelf to be that great Prophet, the Son of the Moſt High, by many unqueſtionable Miracles, of which they themſelves had been Eye-witneſſes; and though by the Permiſſion of Omnipotence, who had determined by this Means, to bring about the Redemption of Mankind, they had wickedly crucified and ſlain him, yet God had raiſed him from the Dead; nor was it conſiſtent with the Juſtice and Goodneſs of the Almighty, eſpecially thoſe divine Predictions made concerning him, that he ſhould be confined in the Chambers of the Grave: David having particularly foretold, "That his fleſh ſhould reſt in hope," that "God would not leave his Soul in Hell, neither ſuffer his Holy One to ſee Corruption;" but would make known to him the Way to Life; That this Prophecy could not relate to David himſelf, as he had many Ages ſince been reduced to Duſt, and his fleſh paſſed through the different Stages of Corruption, his Tomb being

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yet viſible among them, and from whence he was known never to return: and therefore the Prophecy muſt relate to Chriſt, having never been truly fulfilled in any but him, who both died and was riſen again, whereof they were his Witneſſes. Nay, that he was not only riſen from the Dead but aſcended into the higheſt Heaven, and according to David's Prediction, "Sat down on the Right Hand of God, until he had made his Enemies his Footſtool:" which could not be primarily meant of David, as he never aſcended bodily into Heaven; that therefore the whole Houſe of Iſrael ought to believe, that this very Jeſus, whom they had crucified, was the Perſon whom God had appointed to be the Meſſiah, the Founder of the Chriſtian Church, and the Saviour of the World.

This Diſcourſe, tho' the firſt that St. Peter ever made in publick, deeply affected the Audience, and every Word, like a Dagger, pierced them to the Heart; ſo that they cried out, "Men and Brethren, what ſhall we do?" To which Peter anſwered, The only Way to expiate your Guilt, obtain Pardon for the many Sins you have committed, and acquire the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, is to repent ſincerely, and be baptized into the Religion of this crucified Saviour. Upon theſe Terms the Promiſes of the New Covenant, ratified by the Death of the Son of God, will belong to you and your Children, and to all that ſincerely believe and embrace the Goſpel. He alſo uſed the moſt forcible and endearing Expreſſions to prevail on them to liſten to the inviting calls of the Son of God, and by that Means to ſave themſelves from that unavoidable Ruin and deſtruction which would ſhortly fall on the Heads of the wicked and Headſtrong Generation of unbelieving Jews.

The effect of this Diſcourſe was equally wonderful and ſurpriſing; for vaſt Numbers of thoſe, who before ridiculed the Religion of Jeſus, now acknowledged him for their Saviour, and flew to him for Refuge from the impending Storm: and St. Luke tells us, that there were that Day added to the Church no leſs than Three Thouſand Souls, who were all Baptized and received into the Flock of the great Shepherd of Iſrael, the Biſhop of our Souls. A quick and plentiful Harveſt indeed! "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our Eyes."

Soon after this wonderful Converſion, Peter and John going up to the Temple about Three in the Afternoon, near the Concluſion of one of the ſolemn Hours of Prayer, they ſaw a poor impotent Cripple, near forty Years of Age, who had been lame from his Birth, lying at "the beautiful Gate of the Temple," and aſking Alms of thoſe who entered the ſacred Edifice. This miſerable Object moved their Compaſſion; and Peter beholding him with attention, ſaid, the Riches of this World, the Silver and Gold ſo highly coveted by the Sons of Men, are not in my Power to beſtow; but I poſſeſs the Power of reſtoring Life and Heath, and am ready to aſſiſt thee. Then taking the Man by the Hand, commanded him in the Name of "Jeſus of Naza-

reth to riſe up and walk." Immediately the Nerves and Sinews were enlarged, and the ſeveral Parts of the deceaſed Member performed their natural Functions. Upon which the Man accompanied them into the Temple, walking, leaping, and praiſing God.

So ſtrange and extraordinary a Cure filled the Minds of the People with Admiration, and their Curioſity drew them round the Apoſtles to view the Men who had performed it. Peter, ſeeing the Multitude gathering round them, took the Opportunity of ſpeaking to them in the following Manner: "Men and Brethren, this remarkable Cure ſhould not excite your Admiration of us, as if we had performed it by our own Power. It was wrought in the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth, our crucified Maſter, by the Power of that very Chriſt, that holy and juſt Perſon, whom you yourſelves denied, and delivered to Pilate, nay, and preferred a Murderer before him, when the Governor was deſirous of letting him go. But tho' you have put him to Death, yet we are Witneſſes that he hath raiſed him again from the Dead, and that he is aſcended into Heaven, where he will remain till the great and tremendous Day of general Reſtitution. This I know was done by you and your Rulers through Ignorance, not being thoroughly convinced of the greatneſs and divinity of his Perſon; an Ignorance by which the great and righteous Deſigns of Omnipotence were brought about, and the Prophecies concerning the Perſons and Sufferings of the Meſſiah delivered by Moſes, Samuel, and all the Prophets ſince the World began, have been accompliſhed. But now it is high Time to repent and turn to God, that your crying Sins may be forgiven, that when the Meſſiah ſhall ſhortly appear to execute Judgment upon the Jewiſh Nation, it may be a Time of Comfort to you, as it will be of Vengeance and Deſtruction to others. You ſhould remember that you are the peculiar Perſons to whom the Bleſſings and the Promiſes primarily belong, and to whom the Almighty firſt ſent his Son, that he might ſhower on you his Bleſſings, by turning you away from your Iniquities."

While Peter was ſpeaking to the People in one Part of the Temple, John was, in all Probability, doing the ſame in the other; and the Succeſs plainly indicated how powerful the preaching of the Apoſtles was; five thouſand Perſons embracing the Doctrines of the Goſpel, and acknowledging the crucified Jeſus for their Lord and Saviour.

Such amazing Succeſs could not fail of exerting the Attention and Envy of the Rulers of Iſrael. Accordingly the Prieſts and Sadduces repaired to the Roman Magiſtrate, and intimated to him that, in all Probability, this Concourſe of People would prove the Cauſe of a Tumult and Inſurrection. Upon this Information, the Captain of the Temple ſeized on the Apoſtles, and caſt them into Priſon.

The next Day they were carried before the Jewiſh Sanhedrim; and being aſked by what Power and Authority

rity they had done this, Peter boldly anſwered, " Be it known unto you, and to all the Deſcendants of Jacob, that this Miracle was wrought wholly in the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom ye yourſelves have crucified and ſlain, and whom the Almighty hath raiſed again from the dead. This is the Stone which you Builders refuſed, and which is become the Head of the Corner. Nor is there any other way by which you, or any of the Sons of Men, can be ſaved, but by this crucified Saviour."

This boldneſs of the Apoſtles was admired by all, even by the Court of Sanhedrim. And it ſhould be remembered, that theſe very Judges were the Perſons who had ſo lately condemned the Bleſſed Jeſus himſelf, and had no other way of juſtifying their Proceedings than by a ſecond act of Cruelty: that the Apoſtles did not charge them with the Crime of crucifying the Son of God in ſecret, but in the open Court of Judicature, and in the hearing of all the People.

The Court after beholding them with a kind of Aſtoniſhment, remembered that they had ſeen them with Jeſus of Nazareth, and therefore ordered them to withdraw, while they debated among themſelves what was proper to be done. It was impoſſible to deny the Miracle; for it was performed before all the People, and the Perſon on whom it was wrought, no Stranger in Jeruſalem. They therefore reſolved to charge them ſtrictly not to preach any more in the Name of Jeſus. Accordingly they were again called in, and acquainted with this Reſolution of the Council. To which the Apoſtles anſwered, That as they had received a Commiſſion from Heaven, to declare to all Nations what they had ſeen and heard, it was certainly their Duty to obey God rather than Man.

This was a fair Appeal to the Conſciences of their very Judges; but theſe Rulers of Iſrael, inſtead of being ſatisfied with it, would, in all Probability, have proceeded to a greater Violence, had not the People's Veneration for the Apoſtles checked their Malice. So that all they dared to do was to enforce their Menaces, and diſmiſs them.

When the Apoſtles were retured to their Brethren, they informed them of the Treatment they had met with from the Jewiſh Magiſtrates. Upon which they all joined in Prayer to the Almighty for an extraordinary Supply of Courage and Aſſiſtance, to enable them to execute their Commiſſion in theſe perilous Times, and plant the Religion of their crucified Saviour. Nor were their Prayers offered in vain; for before they had concluded their fervent Addreſſes to the Throne of Grace, the Houſe was again ſhaken with a mighty Wind, as on the Day of Pentecoſt; and they were inſtantly repleniſhed with freſh Meaſures of the Holy Ghoſt; and notwithſtanding all the Threatnings of the Jewiſh Rulers, found themſelves enabled to preach the Goſpel of their great and beloved Maſter, with more Boldneſs than ever.

Their Intrepidity had the deſired Effect; the Church increaſed exceedingly;

ingly; and that ſo great a Company, eſpecially the Poor and Needy might be maintained, the Profeſſors of the Religion of the Holy Jeſus ſold their Eſtates, and brought the Money to the Apoſtles, that they might depoſit it in one common Treaſury, and from thence ſupply the ſeveral Exigencies of the Church.

But Hypocriſy was not unknown among the Profeſſors of Religion, even in theſe primitive Times. Ananias and his Wife Saphira, having embraced the Doctrines of the Goſpel, pretended to follow the free and generous Spirit of theſe Times, by conſecrating and devoting their Eſtate to the Honour of God, and the Neceſſities of the Church. Accordingly they ſold their Poſſeſſions, and brought part of the Money and laid it at the Apoſtle's Feet; hoping to deceive them, though guided by the Spirit of Omnipotence. But Peter, at his firſt coming in, aſked Ananias how he could ſuffer Satan to fill his Heart with ſuch enormous Wickedneſs, as to think to deceive the Holy Ghoſt? That before it was ſold it was wholly in his own Power; and afterwards the Money was entirely at his own diſpoſal: ſo that his Action was capable of no other Interpretation, than that he had not only abuſed and injured Man, but mocked the Almighty himſelf, who he muſt know was privy to his moſt ſecret Thoughts.

The Apoſtle had no ſooner finiſhed, than Ananias, to the great Terror of all that were preſent, fell down dead by a Stroke from Heaven.

Not long after his Wife came in, whom Peter reproved in the ſame Manner he had done her Huſband, adding, that ſhe ſhould immediately end her Life in the ſame awful Manner; upon which ſhe was ſmitten by the Hand of Omnipotence, and fell down dead: ſharing with her huſband in the puniſhment, as ſhe had before in the heinous Crime. This remarkable Inſtance of Severity, filled all the Converts with Fear and Trembling, and prevented in a great Meaſure that Hypocriſy and Diſſimulation, by which others might flatter themſelves to deceive the Church.

But ſuch Inſtances of ſeverity were very extraordinary; the Power of the Apoſtles was generally exerted in Works of Mercy and Beneficence towards the Sons and Daughters of Affliction. They cured all kinds of Diſeaſes and caſt out Devils; ſo that they brought the Sick into the Streets, and laid them on Beds and Couches, that the Shadow at leaſt of Peter as he paſſed by, might cover ſome of them; well knowing, a ſingle Touch or Word from either of the Apoſtles was ſufficient to remove the moſt inveterate Diſeaſe.

Such aſtoniſhing Miracles could not fail of contributing to the propagation of the Goſpel, and to convince the World, that the Apoſtles were far more conſiderable Perſons than they at firſt took them to be; and that Poverty and Meanneſs may be blended with true Worth and genuine Greatneſs. How ſmall and inſignificant is the Power and Dignity of an earthly Monarch, when compared to this Glory of the Apoſtles!

Apoſtles! And how contemptible were the Triumphs of a Pompey and a Cæſar, when placed in competition with the Greatneſs and Majeſty of St. Peter, who converted the World from Idolatry and the Worſhip of Devils, and withdrew the Veil of Ignorance from the Underſtandings of the human Race; not by the Power of Armies, nor the inſinuating Artifices of Pomp and Grandeur, but by Faith in the Power of his Saviour.

But the ſtupendous Works of the Apoſtles and the growing Numbers of the Church alarmed the Rulers of Iſrael, who ſeized the Apoſtles and caſt them into Priſon. Their Power, however, was limited, and like the Drop of a Bucket to the Ocean, when oppoſed to the Almighty Arm of the great Jehovah. The Priſon-Doors, tho' faſtened with the utmoſt Caution, opened of themſelves at the Approach of a Meſſenger from the Courts of Heaven, who commanded the Apoſtles to leave the Dungeon, repair to the Temple, and preach the glad Tidings of the Goſpel to the People.

The Officers returning in the Morning, found the Priſon-Doors ſhut and guarded, but the Priſoners gone. This remarkable Circumſtance greatly alarmed them, and they repaired to the Council to acquaint them with what had happened. The Rulers were aſtoniſhed at the News; but hearing that the Apoſtles were teaching in the Temple, they ſent an Officer to bring them, without the leaſt Violence to their Perſons, before the Sanhedrim. Their Orders were ſoon obeyed, and the Diſciples of Jeſus placed before the ſame Court that had ſo lately condemned their Maſter.

The Apoſtles being thus brought before the Sanhedrim, the High-prieſt aſked them how they dared to propagate a Doctrine they had lately ſo ſtrictly charged them not to preach; to which Peter, in the Name of the reſt replied, "We certainly ought to obey God rather than Man. And though you have ſo barbarouſly and contumelioufly treated the Saviour of the World, yet God has raiſed him up to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give both Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins. And of theſe Things both we, and the miraculous Powers which the Holy Ghoſt hath conferred on all Chriſtians, are Witneſſes."

This Anſwer, delivered with remarkable Boldneſs, exaſperated the Council, and they began to conſult how they might deſtroy them. But Gamaliel, a grave and learned Counſellor, after commanding the Apoſtles to withdraw, deſired them to proceed with Caution in an Affair of this Nature; reminding them that ſeveral Perſons had already raiſed Parties, and drawn great Numbers of Perſons after them; but that every one of them had miſcarried, and all their Deſigns were rendered abortive, without the Interpoſition of that Court. That they would therefore do well to let the Apoſtles alone; for if their Doctrines and Deſigns were of human Invention they would come to nothing: but if they were of God all their Powers and Policies would be of no Effect, and ſad Experience

Experience would too ſoon convince them, that they had themſelves oppoſed the Counſels of the Moſt High.

This prudent and rational Advice, had the deſired Succeſs; the Council were ſatisfied, and after commanding the Apoſtles to be ſcourged, they ſtrictly charged them to preach no more in the Name of Jeſus, and ſet them at Liberty. But this Charge had little Effect on the Diſciples of the bleſſed Jeſus; they returned home in Triumph, rejoicing that they were thought worthy to ſuffer in ſo righteous a Cauſe, and to undergo Shame and Reproach for ſo kind and ſo powerful a Maſter. Nor could all the Oppoſition of Men, blended with the Malice of the Powers of Darkneſs, diſcourage them from performing their Duty to the Almighty, or leſſen their Zeal for preaching, both in publick and private, the Doctrine of the Goſpel.

C H A P. VI.

The Tranſactions of St. Peter from the Diſperſion of the Church at Jeruſalem, till his Conteſt with St. Paul at Antioch.

THE Church at Jeruſalem had hitherto been toſſed with gentle Storms, but now it was overtaken by a more violent Tempeſt, which commenced with the Death of the Protomartyr Stephen, and was now carried on with greater Violence; nor did it end but with the Diſperſion of the Diſciples, by which Means the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, which had till now been confined to Judea, and the Profeſſors of it hid in ſecret Places, was preached to the Gentile World, and an ancient Prophecy fulfilled, which ſays, "Out of Sion ſhall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jeruſalem." Thus does the Almighty bring Good out of Evil, and cauſe the malicious Intentions of the Wicked to redound to his Praiſe.

Among the diſperſed Followers of the bleſſed Jeſus, Philip the Deacon retired to Samaria, where he preached the Goſpel, and confirmed his Doctrine by many miraculous Cures, and caſting out Devils. In this City was one Simon, who, by magick Arts and diabolical Sorceries, was beheld with Admiration by the People; and ſome conſidered him as the great Power of God, a Name he blaſphemouſly gave himſelf, pretending to be the firſt and chief Deity, or what every Nation conſidered as the ſupreme God.

This wicked Mortal, hearing the Sermons of Philip, and beholding the Miracles wrought by him, became a Convert to the Religion of Jeſus, and was baptized with the others who had embraced the Chriſtian Doctrine.

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The Apoſtles who continued at Jeruſalem, were ſoon informed of this remarkable Succeſs of Philip's Miniſtry at Samaria, and thought it neceſſary to ſend him Aſſiſtance. Accordingly Peter and John were deputed to this Infant Church, who having prayed and laid their Hands on the new Converts, they received the Holy Ghoſt. Such miraculous Gifts aſtoniſhed the Magician, and deſirous of obtaining the ſame Privilege, he offered the Diſciples Money to inveſt him with this Power, that on whomſoever he laid his Hands he might receive the Holy Ghoſt. But Peter, who perceived the inſincerity of his Heart, rejected his Offer with Scorn and Deteſtation. "Thy Money, ſaid that great Apoſtle, periſh with thee. And as thy Heart is full of Hypocriſy and Deceit, thou canſt have no Share nor Portion in ſo great a Privilege. Thou wouldeſt do well to repent of ſo monſtrous a Crime, and ſincerely apply thyſelf to ſeek the Almighty, that the Thoughts of thy Heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thy Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind is ſtill vicious and corrupt, and that thou art yet bound by the Chains of Iniquity, and in a State diſpleaſing to the Almighty, and dangerous to thy ſelf."

Simon was terrified at this Speech of St. Peter; his Conſcience flew in his Face, and he prayed the Apoſtles to make Interceſſion for him to the Throne of Grace, that the Almighty might pardon his Sin, and not inflict on him thoſe heavy Judgments.

The Apoſtles did not ſtay any longer in Samaria than was neceſſary to confirm the new Converts in the Faith they had embraced, and to preach the glad Tidings of Salvation in the adjacent Villages; after which they returned to Jeruſalem, to aſſiſt the reſt of the Diſciples with their Power.

The Storm, though violent, being at length blown over, the Church enjoyed a Time of Calmneſs and Serenity; during which St. Peter went to viſit the Churches lately planted in thoſe Parts by the Diſciples whom the Perſecution had diſperſed. And at his Arrival at Lydda, he miraculouſly healed Æneas, who had been afflicted with the Palſy, and confined to his Bed Eight Years; but on Peter's bidding him ariſe in the Name of Jeſus, he was immediately reſtored to perfect Health. Nor was the Succeſs of this Miracle confined to Æneas and his Family; the Fame of it was blazed through all the neighbouring Country, and many believed in the Doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa, a Sea-port Town about ſix Miles from Lydda, and the Brethren immediately ſent for Peter, on the following melancholy Occaſion. Tabitha, whoſe Greek Name was Dorcas, a Woman venerable for her Piety, and extenſive Charity, was newly dead, to the great Loſs of all Mankind who love the Paths of Virtue, eſpecially the Poor and Afflicted, who were ſupported by her Charity.

At Peter's Arrival he found her dreſſed for her Funeral Solemnity, and ſurrounded by mournful Widows, who ſhewed the Coats and Garments wherewith ſhe had clothed them, the Mo-

numents of her Liberality. But Peter put them all out, and kneeling down prayed with the utmoſt Fervency; then turning to the Body, he commanded her to ariſe, and taking her by the Hand, preſented her in perfect Health to her Friends and others, who were aſſembled to pay their laſt Duties to ſo good a Woman. This Miracle confirmed thoſe who had newly embraced the Goſpel of Jeſus, and converted many more to the Faith. After which he ſtayed a conſiderable Time at Joppa, lodging in the Houſe of one Simon a Tanner.

During his Abode in this City, one Day when he was offering up his prayers to the Almighty, he found himſelf hungry and called for meat; but while it was dreſſing for him, he fell into a Trance, wherein was preſented to him a large Sheet let down from heaven, containing all Sorts of Creatures clean and unclean; and at the ſame Time a Voice ſaid to him, "ariſe Peter, kill and eat." But the Apoſtle, as yet tenacious of the Rites and Inſtitutions of the Moſaick Law, anſwered, that his Conſcience refuſed to comply, having never eaten any Thing that was common or unclean. To which the Voice replied, That it was unjuſt to conſider that was common which God had cleanſed. This was done thrice, after which the Veſſel was again drawn up to Heaven, and the Viſion diſappeared. By this ſymbolical Repreſentation St. Peter was given to underſtand, that the Almighty was now going to ſend him on a new embaſſy, which the Spirit at the ſame Time commanded him to undertake. While he was ſtill wondering with himſelf what the event would prove, three Meſſengers knocked at the Gate, enquiring for him; and from them he received the following Account. That Cornelius a Roman, Captain of a Band of Italian Soldiers at Cæſarea, a Perſon of great Piety and Religion, one who had been long a Proſelyte of the Gate, had, by an immediate Command from God, ſent for him.

The next Day Peter, accompanied with ſome of his Brethren, went with the Meſſengers, and the Day after arrived at Cæſarea. Cornelius, having Information of his coming, had ſummoned his Friends and Kindred to Cæſarea; and at the Apoſtle's entering his Houſe fell at his Feet, a Method of Addreſs frequent in the Eaſtern Countries. But Peter, who conſidered that Honour as due only to the Almighty, lift him up, and declared to the Company the Reaſon of his coming, ſaying he had lately learned, that there was no Reſpect of Perſons with God.

When the Apoſtle had ended his Speech, Cornelius, at his Requeſt, related the particular Reaſon for his ſending for him. "Four Days ago, ſaid this Roman Officer, being converſant in the Duties of Faſting and Prayer, an Angel from the Courts of Heaven appeared to me, declaring that my Prayers and Alms were come up as a Memorial before the Throne of the Moſt High; and at the ſame Time ordered me to ſend to Joppa for one Simon Peter, who lodged in the Houſe of

of a Tanner near the Sea-ſide, who would give me farther Information in the Duties of Religion. Accordingly I made no Heſitation to obey the Heavenly Meſſenger; I ſent immediately for thee; and now thou art come, and we are met together to hear what Inſtructions thou haſt to communicate."

This Relation of the Roman Centurion aſtoniſhed the Apoſtle; but he was ſoon convinced that God had broken down the Partition Wall, and no longer maintained a peculiar Kindneſs for the Sons of Jacob; that it was not the Nation, but the Religion; not the external Quality of the Man, but the internal Temper of the Mind, that recommended the Human Race to the Favour of Omnipotence; that the devout and pious, the righteous and the good Man, whatever Part of the Earth he may inhabit, is the Favourite of Heaven; that God as highly reſpects a juſt and virtuous Man in the barren Waſtes of Sythia, as on the Mountain of Sion, that the reconciling and making Peace between God and Man by Jeſus Chriſt, was the Doctrine publiſhed by the Prophets of old; and that God had now anointed and conſecrated Jeſus of Nazareth with Divine Powers, in the Exerciſe whereof he went about doing good to the Children of Men: that they had ſeen all he had done among the Jews, whom though they had ſlain and crucified, yet that God had raiſed him again the third Day, and had openly ſhewed him to his Apoſtles and Followers, whom he had choſen to be his peculiar Witneſſes, and whom he had accordingly permitted to eat and drink with him after his Reſurrection, commanding them to preach the Goſpel to all Mankind, and to teſtify that he was the Perſon whom God had ordained to be the great Judge of the World; that all the Prophets with one Conſent bore Witneſs of him; and that this Jeſus is he in whoſe Name whoſoever believes, would certainly receive remiſſion of Sins.

While Peter was thus preaching to them, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon the greateſt Part of his hearers, enabling them to ſpeak ſeveral Languages, and in them to magnify the great Creator of the Sons of Men. At this the Jews who accompanied Peter, marvelled exceedingly, to ſee that the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt were poured upon the Gentiles; and Peter ſeeing this told the Company, that he knew no Reaſon why theſe Perſons ſhould not be baptized, as they had received the Holy Ghoſt as well as they; and accordingly he gave orders that they ſhould be baptized, and to confirm them in the Holy Faith they had embraced, he ſtaid with them ſome Time.

This Action of St. Peter, was conſidered in various Lights by the Brethren at Jeruſalem, who being but lately converted to the Chriſtian Faith, were zealouſly attached to the Religious Ceremonies of the Moſaic Inſtitution, and therefore, moſt of them ſeverely charged Peter at his return, as being too familiar with the Gentile. How powerful is the Prejudice of Education! The Jews had for many Ages, conceived an inveterate Oppoſition againſt the Gentiles, conſidering them as Perſons hated by the Almighty,

who had choſen them for his peculiar People. The Law of Moſes indeed enjoined them to be kind to their own Nation in preference to all others; and the Rites and Inſtitutions of their Religion, and the peculiar Form of their Commonwealth, rendered them very different from the Inhabitants of other Countries: a Separation which in after Ages they contracted into a much narrower Compaſs. They were alſo tenaciouſly proud of their external Privileges in being the Deſcendants of Abraham, the Friend of God; and therefore looked upon the reſt of the World as Reprobates, proudly refuſing to hold any Converſation with them, and even to ſhew them the common Kindneſſes of Humanity.

It is therefore no Wonder that they were highly diſpleaſed with St. Peter; nor would he have been able to have defended his Conduct in a ſatisfactory Manner, had not he been charged with a peculiar Commiſſion from the Almighty for extending the Privileges of the Goſpel to the Gentile World. But he had no ſooner given them an impartial Account of the whole Tranſaction, than they immediately changed their Diſpleaſure againſt him into Thanks, to the beneficent Father of the Human Race, who had granted to the Gentiles alſo Repentance unto Life eternal.

Peter having thus finiſhed his Viſitation to the new-planted Churches, returned to Jeruſalem, and was indefatigable in inſtructing the Converts in the Religion of Jeſus, and preaching the glad Tidings of Salvation to the Deſcendants of Jacob. But he did not long continue in this pleaſing Courſe; Herod Agrippa, in order to ingratiate himſelf into the Favour of the Jews, put St. James to Death. And finding the Action was highly acceptable to that ſtiff-necked People, he reſolved to extend his Cruelty to Peter, and accordingly caſt him into Priſon. But the Churches were inceſſant in their Prayers to God for his Safety; and what have Mortals to fear, when guarded by the Hand of Omnipotence! Herod was perſuaded he ſhould ſoon accompliſh his Intention, and ſacrifice Peter to the inſatiable Cruelty of the Jews. But the Night before this intended Execution, a Meſſenger from the Courts of Heaven viſited the gloomy Horrors of the Dungeon, where he found Peter aſleep between his Keepers. The Angel raiſed him up, and took off his Chains, ordering him to gird on his Garments, and follow him. Peter obeyed, and having paſſed throught the firſt and ſecond Watch they came to the Iron Gate leading to the City, which opened to them of its own Accord. The Angel alſo accompanied him thro' one of the Streets, and then departed from him; on which Peter came to himſelf and perceived that it was no Viſion; but that his great and beloved Maſter had really ſent a Meſſenger from above, and releaſed him from Priſon. He therefore repaired to the Houſe of Mary, where the Church was aſſembled, and offering up their Prayers to the Throne of Grace for his Safety. On his knocking at the Door, a Maid who came to

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let him in, knowing his Voice, ran back to tell them that Peter was at the Door; which they at firſt conſidered as the Effect of Fancy; but the Damſel continuing to affirm that it was really true, they concluded it was his Angel, or ſome Meſſenger ſent to him from the Court of Heaven. But on opening the Door, they were convinced of their Miſtake, finding that it was really Peter himſelf, who briefly told them how he was delivered; and deſiring them to inform his Brethren of his being ſet at Liberty, retired to another Place.

In the Morning the Officers came from Herod to the Priſon, with Orders to bring Peter out to the People, who were gathered together to behold his Execution. But when they came to the Priſon the Keepers informed them that the Apoſtle had made his Eſcape; which ſo exaſperated Herod, that he commanded thoſe who were entruſted with the Care of the Priſoners to be put to Death.

Some Time after this miraculous Deliverance of St. Peter, a Controverſy aroſe between the Jewiſh and the Gentile Converts, with regard to the Obſervation of the Moſaic Law: a Diſpute which gave great Uneaſineſs to the Minds of many Perſons; the Jews zealouſly contending that it was abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation to be circumciſed, and obſerve the Precepts of the ceremonial Law, as well as thoſe of the Goſpel. To compoſe this Difference, it was thought neceſſary to ſummon a general Council of the Apoſtles and Brethren to meet at Jeruſalem This was accordingly done, and the Caſe thoroughly debated. At laſt Peter ſtood up, and declared that God having choſen him out of all the Apoſtles to be the firſt Preacher of the Goſpel among the Gentiles, God, who was beſt able to Judge of the Hearts of Men, had borne Witneſs to them, that they were accepted of him, by giving them his Holy Spirit as well as he had done the Jews; and conſequently, that there was no Difference between them. They could not therefore place the Jewiſh Yoke, which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear, upon the Necks of the Diſciples, without tempting and provoking the Almighty, who had given ſufficient Reaſons to believe, that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, would be ſaved by the Grace of the Goſpel.

This Declaration of St. Peter convinced the Church, and it was unanimouſly decreed, that no other Burden than the temporary Obſervance of a few particular Precepts, equally convenient to the Jew and Gentile, ſhould be impoſed on them. And the deciſion was drawn up into a ſynodical Epiſtle, and ſent to the ſeveral Churches for allaying the Heats and Controverſies this Diſpute had occaſioned.

Soon after this Council, Peter left Jeruſalem, and went down to Antioch; where uſing the Liberty given him by the Goſpel, he freely eat and converſed with the Gentile Proſelytes, conſidering them now as "Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſehold of God." This he had been taught by the Viſion of the Sheet let down from Heaven; this had been lately decreed

decreed at Jeruſalem; this he had before practiſed with Regard to Cornelius and his Family, and juſtified the Action to the Satisfaction of his Accuſers; and this he had freely and innocently done at Antioch, till ſome of the Jewiſh Brethren coming thither, he for fear of offending them, withdrew himſelf from the Gentiles, as if it had been unlawful for him to hold Converſation with uncircumciſed Perſons; notwithſtanding he knew, and was fully ſatisfied that our Bleſſed Saviour had broken down the Wall of Partition between the Jew and Gentile.

By thus acting againſt the Light of his own Mind and Judgment, he condemned what he had approved, and deſtroyed the Superſtructure he had before erected; at the ſame Time he confirmed the Jewiſh Zealots in their inveterate Errors, filled the Minds of the Gentiles with Scruples, and their Conſciences with Fears. Nor was this all, the old Prejudices between Jew and Gentile were revived, and the whole Number of Jewiſh Converts following the Apoſtle's Example, ſeparated themſelves from the Company of the Gentile Chriſtians. Nay, even Barnabas himſelf was carried away by this Torrent of unwarrantable Practice.

St. Paul was now at Antioch, and reſolutely oppoſed St. Peter to his Face; he publickly reproved him as a Perſon worthy to be blamed for his groſs Prevarication. He reaſoned and ſeverely expoſtulated with him, that he who was himſelf a Jew, and conſequently under a more immediate Obligation of ſerving the Moſaic Law, ſhould throw off the Yoke himſelf, and at the ſame Time endeavour to impoſe it on the Gentiles, who were never under Neceſſity of obſerving the Ceremonies of the Iſraelites. A ſevere tho' an impartial Charge; but the remarkable Eagerneſs of St. Paul to place Things on a proper Foundation, though he ſucceeded for the preſent, made a great Noiſe afterwards in the World, and gave Occaſion to the Enemies of Chriſtiany to repreſent the whole as a Compact of Forgery and Deceit: of ſuch pernicious Conſequence are Diſputes among the Princes of the Church, and ſo fatal are the Effects of Puſillanimity, and a Fear of offending Perſons bigotted to inſignificant Ceremonies.

CHAP. VIII.

The Tranſactions of St. Peter from the End of the ſacred Hiſtory, till his Martyrdom at Rome.

WE have thus far had an infallible Guide to direct us in writing the Life of this great Apoſtle; but here the ſacred Hiſtorian hath left us, and therefore we muſt have Recourſe to the Antients for Materials to finiſh the Superſtructure.

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Some Time before this Conteſt at Antioch, St. Peter preached the Goſpel in various Parts of the World, enlarging the Kingdom of his great Maſter, and ſpreading the glad Tidings of Salvation among the Inhabitants of various Countries; among the reſt thoſe of Rome, then the Miſtreſs of the World. In that Capital he is ſaid to have continued ſeveral Years, till the Emperor Claudius, taking Advantage of ſome ſeditious Tumults raiſed by the Jews, publiſhed an Edict, whereby they were baniſhed from Rome, and among the reſt St. Peter, who returned to Jeruſalem, and was preſent at the Synod already mentioned. But how long he continued in the Capital of Judea is uncertain; for we have no Account of his Tranſactions for many Years. This however is certain, that he was not idle in the Service of his great Maſter; and Euſebius tells us, from Metaphraſtes, that he viſited ſeveral of the Weſtern Parts, and particularly this Iſland of Great Britain; where he continued ſeveral Years, ſpreading the glad Tidings of Salvation in theſe remote Parts, and converting the ſeveral Nations to the Chriſtian Faith.

But however this be, whether St. Peter was or was not in England, it is certain that towards the latter End of Nero's Reign he returned to Rome, where he found the Minds of the People ſtrangely bewitched, and hardened againſt the Doctrines of the Goſpel by the Sorceries of Simon Magus, who, as I have already obſerved, was chaſtiſed by Peter for his Wickedneſs at Samaria. This Monſter of Impiety not only oppoſed the preaching of the Apoſtles, but alſo did all in his Power to render them and their Doctrine odious to the Emperor. St. Peter, foreſeeing that the Calumnies of Simon and his Adherents would haſten his Death, took the greater Pains, and was ſtill more aſſiduous to confirm thoſe he had been any Ways inſtrumental in converting to the ſublime Truths they had received. And in order to this ſtrongly oppoſed the great Deceiver of Mankind: for in the laſt Year of his Life, he ſeems to have wrote his two Epiſtles to the diſperſed Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bythinia; and in an appointed Encounter with Simon diſcovered his magical Impoſtures, and through the Power and Aſſiſtance of the Almighty, brought him to an exemplary and miſerable Death.

This happened in the following Manner: The Apoſtle meeting with Simon at Rome, and finding him ſtill pretending to be ſome great One, even the promiſed Meſſiah, he could not help oppoſing zealouſly his preſumptuous Arrogancy. But Simon, more incenſed by the Oppoſition, offered to give the People ſuch an evident Demonſtration of his being what he pretended, that he would place the whole beyond Contradiction, by immediately aſcending up to Heaven. Upon this, by the help of two inviſible Devils, as in a Chariot of Fire, he raiſed himſelf from the Earth, and ſeemed to be flying towards the Regions of Heaven. St. Peter and St. Paul beholding

holding the Deluſion; had recourſe to Prayers, and obtained their Petitions of the Almighty, namely, that the Impoſtor ſhould be ſoon diſcovered for the Honour of the bleſſed Jeſus. Accordingly, at the Command of God, the Devils left him, and he, being deſerted fell headlong to the Ground; by which he was ſo bruiſed that he died in a very ſhort Time.

Such was the End of this miſerable, this unhappy Man; but the News of it no ſooner reached the Emperor's Ears, than he vowed Revenge, both for the Death of his Favourite, and the Endeavours uſed by the Apoſtles to "turn Mankind from Darkneſs unto Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God." Accordingly he iſſued Orders for apprehending St. Peter, together with his Companion St. Paul. St. Ambroſe tells us, that when the People perceived the Danger to which St. Peter was now expoſed, prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for a while to ſome ſecure Retreat, that his Life might be preſerved for the Benefit of the Church. Peter, with great Reluctance, yielded to their Intreaties, and made his Eſcape by Night: but as he paſſed the Gate, he was met by a Perſon in the Form of his great and beloved Maſter, and on his aſking him whither he was going, anſwered "to Rome to be crucified a ſecond Time." Which Peter taking for a Reproof of his Cowardice, returned again into the City, was ſoon after apprehended, and caſt, together with St. Paul, into the Mamertime Priſon. Here they were confined eight or nine Months, but ſpent their Time in the Exerciſes of Religion, eſpecially in preaching to the Priſoners, and thoſe who reſorted to them. And during this Confinement it is generally thought St. Peter wrote his ſecond Epiſtle to the diſperſed Jews: wherein he endeavours to confirm them in the Belief and Practice of Chriſtianity, and to fortify them againſt thoſe poiſonous and pernicious Principles and Actions which even then began to break in upon the Chriſtian Church.

Nero at laſt returned from Acaia, entered Rome in Triumph; and ſoon after his arrival, reſolved that the Apoſtles ſhould fall as Victims and Sacrifices to his Cruelty and Revenge. While the fatal Stroke was daily expected, the Chriſtians in Rome were continually offering up their Prayers to Heaven, to protect thoſe two holy Perſons. But the Almighty was now willing to put an End to their Sorrows; and after ſealing the Truth they had preached with their own Blood, to receive them into the Regions of eternal Bliſs and Happineſs, and exchange their Crowns of Martyrdom for Crowns of Glory. Accordingly they were both condemned by the cruel Emperor of Rome; and St. Peter having taken his Farewel of the Brethren, eſpecially of St. Paul, was taken from the Priſon, and led to the Top of the Vatican Mount near the Tiber, where he was ſentenced to ſurrender up his Life on the Croſs.

At his coming to the Place of Execution, he begged the Favour of the Officers, that he might not be crucified

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in the common Manner, but with his Head downward; affirming that he was unworthy to ſuffer in the ſame Poſture in which our Lord had ſuffered before him. This Requeſt was accordingly complied with; and the great Apoſtle St. Peter ſurrendered up his Soul into the hands of his great and beneficent Maſter, who came down from Heaven to ranſom Mankind from Deſtruction, and open for them the Gates of the heavenly Canaan.

His Body, being taken down from the Croſs, is ſaid to have been embalmed by Mercellinus, the Preſbuter, after the Manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the Appian Way, two Miles from Rome. Here it remained till the time of Pope Cornelius, who reconveyed it to the Vatican, where it reſted in an obſcure Place, till the Reign of Conſtantine, who, from the great Reverence he entertained for the Chriſtian Religion, erected many Churches at Rome, and rebuilt and vaſtly enlarged the Vatican in honour of St. Peter. He alſo greatly enriched the Church with Gifts and Ornaments; and it has contiuued increaſing in riches and ſplendor every Age, till it is become one of the Wonders of the World.

If we conſider St. Peter as a Man, there ſeems to have been a natural eagerneſs predominant in his Temper, which animated his Soul to the moſt bold and generous undertakings. It was this, in a great Meaſure, that prompted him to be ſo very forward to ſpeak, and to return Anſwers ſometimes before he had well conſidered them. It was this that made him expoſe his Perſon to the moſt imminent Dangers, promiſe thoſe great Things in behalf of his Maſter, reſolutely draw his Sword in his Quarrel againſt a whole Band of Soldiers, and wound a Servant of the High-prieſt; nay he had, in all probability, attempted greater Things, had not his Lord reſtrained his Impetuoſity, and given a ſeaſonable check to his Fury.

If we conſider him as a Diſciple of the Bleſſed Jeſus, we ſhall find him exemplary in the great Duties of Religion. His humility and lowlineſs of Mind were remarkable. With what a paſſionate Earneſtneſs, on the conviction of a Miracle, did he beg of our Bleſſed Savour to depart from him; thinking it unworthy the Son of God to come near ſo vile a Sinner! When the great Redeemer of Mankind, by that amazing Condeſcenſion, ſtooped ſo low as to waſh the Feet of his Diſciples, Peter could not be perſuaded to admit his performing it, thinking it highly improper that ſo great a Perſon ſhould ſubmit to ſuch a ſervile Office towards a Perſon ſo mean as himſelf; nor could he be induced to admit of it, till his great Maſter threatened to deprive him of his Favour. When Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, heightened in his Opinion of him, by an immediate Command from the Almighty concerning him, would have treated him with more than ordinary Marks of Eſteem and Veneration, he was ſo far from complying with it, that he declared he

was nothing more than a Mortal like himſelf. His Love and Zeal for his Maſter were remarkable; he thought he could never expreſs either at too high a Rate; venturing on the greateſt Perils, and expoſing his Life to the moſt imminent Dangers. His Forwardneſs to own his great Maſter for the Meſſiah and Son of the Moſt High was remarkably great; and it was this that drew from his Lord that honourable Encomium, "Bleſſed art thou Simon Bar-jona." But his Courage and Conſtancy in confeſſing Chriſt, even before his moſt inveterate Enemies, was ſtill greater after he had recovered himſelf from his Fall. How plainly does he tell the Jews that they were the Murderers and Crucifiers of the Lord of Glory? Nay, with what an undaunted Courage, with what an heroick greatneſs of Soul did he tell the very Sanhedrim, who had ſentenced and condemned him, that they were guilty of his Death, and that they had no other way of eſcaping the Vengeance of the the Almighty, but by the Merits of that very Jeſus, whom they had crucified and put to Death.

Laſtly, if we conſider him as an Apoſtle, as a Paſtor, or Shepherd of the Souls of Men, we ſhall find him faithful and diligent in his Office, zealouſly endeavouring to inſtruct the Ignorant, reduce the Erroneous, ſtrengthen the Weak, confirm the Strong, reclaim the Vicious, and turn the Children of Men into the Paths of Righteouſneſs. He never omitted any Opportunity of preaching to the People, and ſpreading the glad Tidings of the Goſpel among the human Race; and ſo powerful were his Diſcourſes, that he converted many Thouſands at one Time. How many painful Journies and dangerous Voyages did he undertake! with what unconquerable Patience did he endure the greateſt Trials, ſurmount every Difficulty, and remove every Diſpoſition, that he might plant the Goſpel of his beloved Maſter! Never refuſing even to lay down his Life to promote it. Nor was he only aſſiduous to perform theſe Duties himſelf; he was alſo careful to animate others to do the like, earneſtly preſſing and perſuading the Paſtors and Governors of the Church to feed the Flock of God, to labour freely for the Good of the Souls of Men, and not undertake thoſe Offices to acquire Advantages to themſelves; beſeeching them to treat the Flock committed to their Care with Lenity and Gentleneſs, and to be themſelves ſhining Examples of Piety and Religion, the ſureſt Method of rendering their Miniſtry ſucceſsful. And becauſe it was impoſſible for him to be always preſent, to teach and warn the Children of Men, he endeavoured by Letters to imprint in their Minds the Practice of what they had been taught. A Method, he tells us, he was reſolved to purſue, as long as he continued an Inhabitant of this World; "thinking it meet, while he was in this Tabernacle, to ſtir up, by putting them in mind of theſe Things;" that ſo, "they might be able after his Deceaſe, to have them always in Remembrance.

Saint

Saint PAUL.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. Paul from his Birth, till his Converſion.

ST. Paul was a Native of Tarſus, and a Deſcendant from the ancient Stock of Abraham. He was Born about two Years before the Bleſſed Jeſus, and belonged to the Tribe of Benjamin, the youngeſt Son of Jacob, who thus propheſied of him: "Benjamin ſhall ravin as a Wolf; in the Morning he ſhall devour the Prey, and at Night he ſhall divide the Spoil;" a prophetical Character which Tertullian and others will have to be accompliſhed in our Apoſtle. For, in his Youth or the Morning of his Days, he perſecuted the Churches, deſtroying the Flock of the Almighty; he devoured the Prey: in his declining Age, or Evening of his Days, he became a Phyſician of the Nations, feeding and diſtributing with the greateſt Care and Aſſiduity the Sheep of Chriſt, the great Shepherd of Iſrael; he divided the Spoil.

Tarſus, the Place of this Apoſtle's Nativity, was the Metropolis of Cilicia, and ſituated about three hundred Miles diſtant from Jeruſalem; it was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman Municipium, or free Corporation, inveſted with the Privileges of Rome by the two firſt Emperors, as a Reward for the Citizens firm Adherence to the Cæſars in the Rebellion of Craſſus. St. Paul was therefore Born a Roman Citizen, and he often pleads this Privilege on his Trials.

It was common for the inhabitants of Tarſus to ſend their Children into other Cities for Learning and Improvement; eſpecially to Jeruſalem, where they were ſo numerous, that they had a Synagogue of their own called the Synagogue of the Cilicians. To this Capital our Apoſtle was alſo ſent, and brought up at the Feet of that eminent Rabbi Gamaliel, in the moſt exact Knowledge of the Law of Moſes. Nor did he fail to profit by the Inſtructions of that great Maſter; for he ſo diligently conformed himſelf to its Precepts, that

without boaſting, he aſſerts of himſelf that Touching the Righteouſneſs of the Law, he was Blameleſs, and defied even his Enemies to alledge any Thing to the contrary even in his Youth. He joined himſelf to the Sect of the Phariſees, the moſt ſtrict Order of the Jewiſh Religion; but at the ſame Time the proudeſt, and the greateſt Enemies to Chriſt and his holy Religion.

With Regard to his double capacity, of Jewiſh Extraction and Roman Freedom, he had two Names, Saul and Paul, the former Hebrew and the latter Latin. It was common for the Deſcendants of Benjamin to give the Name Saul to their Children ever ſince the Time of the firſt King of Iſrael, who was choſen out of that Tribe; and Paul was a Name as common among the Romans. We muſt alſo conſider his Trade of Tent-making as a Part of his Education, it being the conſtant Practice of the Jews, to bring up their Children to ſome Honeſt Calling, that, in caſe of Neceſſity, they might provide for themſelves by the Labour of their own Hands.

Saul having obtained a thorough Knowledge of the Sciences cultivated by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery Temper, became a great Champion of the Law of Moſes, and the Tradition of the Elders, which he conſidered as a Zeal for God. This rendered him impatient of all Oppoſition to the Doctrine and Tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement Blaſphemer and Perſecutor of the Chriſtians, who were commonly reputed the Enemies and Deſtroyers of the Jewiſh Oeconomy. We muſt not however conſider our Apoſtle as guilty of the Pride and Hypocriſy of the Phariſees; for he declares, that he had ever been careful to act in Conformity to the Dictates of his Conſcience, by which he thought himſelf bound to do many Things contrary to the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth. It was therefore the Prejudices of his Education, and the natural Warmth of his Temper that excited him to thoſe violent Perſecutions of the Chriſtians, for which he became ſo famous.

The firſt Action we find him engaged in, was the Diſputation he and his Countrymen had with the Martyr Stephen, with Regard to the Meſſiah. The Chriſtian was too hard for them in the Diſpute; but they were too powerful for him in their Civil Intereſts; for being enraged at his Convincing Arguments, they carried him before the High-prieſt, who by falſe Accuſations condemned him to Death. How far Saul was concerned in this cruel Action is impoſſible to ſay; all we know is, that he kept the Raiment of them that ſlew him.

The Storm of Perſecution againſt the Church being thus begun, it increaſed prodigiouſly, and the poor Chriſtians of Jeruſalem were miſerably harraſſed and Diſperſed. In this Perſecution our Apoſtle was a principal Agent, ſearching all the adjacent Parts for the afflicted Saints, beating ſome in the Synagogue, compelling ſome to blaſpheme, confining ſome in Priſon and procuring others to be put to Death.

Nor

Nor could Jeruſalem and the adjacent Parts confine his fiery Zeal; he applied to the Sanhedrim, and procured a Commiſſion from that Court, to extend his Perſecution to Damaſcus. How eternally inſatiable is the Fury of a miſguided Zeal! how reſtleſs and unwearied in its Deſigns of Cruelty! It had already ſufficiently harraſſed the poor Chriſtians at Jeruſalem, but not content with this, it perſecuted them even to ſtrange Cities, even to Damaſcus itſelf, whither many of them fled for Shelter, reſolved to bring them back to Jeruſalem, in order to their Puniſhment and Execution.

It may not be improper here to obſerve, that the Jewiſh Sanhedrim had not only the Power of ſeizing and ſcourging Offenders againſt their Law, within the Bounds of their own Country, but, by the Connivance and Favour of the Romans, might ſend into other Countries, where there were any Synagogues that acknowledged a Dependence in religious Affairs upon the Council of Jeruſalem, to apprehend them; and accordingly Saul was ſent to Damaſcus, to apprehend what Chriſtians he could find in that City, and bring them bound to Jeruſalem.

But the Almighty deſigned to employ him in a Work of a very different Nature, and accordingly ſtopped him in his Journey. For as he was travelling between Jeruſalem and Damaſcus, to execute the Commiſſion of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, a refulgent Light, far exceeding the brightneſs of the Sun, darted upon him; at which both him and his Companions were terribly amazed and confounded, falling, together with their Horſes, proſtrate on the Ground. Amidſt this Confuſion, a Voice was heard in the Hebrew Language, ſaying, "Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" To which Saul replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" And was immediately anſwered, "I am Jeſus of Nazareth whom thou perſecuteſt: It is hard for thee to kick againſt the Pricks." As if the bleſſed Jeſus had ſaid, "All thy Attempts to extirpate the Faith in me, will prove abortive, and, like kicking againſt the Spikes, wound and torment thyſelf."

Saul was ſufficiently convinced of his Folly in acting againſt Jeſus, whom he was now aſſured to be the true Meſſiah, and aſked, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" On which the bleſſed Jeſus informed him of the true Intention of his Appearance, "Ariſe, ſaid he, and ſtand upon thy Feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this Purpoſe, to make thee a Miniſter and a Witneſs, both of thoſe Things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the Gentiles, unto whom now I ſend thee, to open their Eyes, and turn them from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveneſs of Sins, and Inheritance among them, that are ſanctified by Faith that is in me." And for farther Inſtruction, the immaculate Jeſus referred him to one of his Followers named

named Ananias, commanding him to repair immediately to the City.

The Company which were with him heard the Voice, but did not ſee the Perſon who ſpake from Heaven. In all Probability they were ignorant of the Hebrew Language, and therefore only heard a confuſed Sound; for the Apoſtle himſelf tells us, that "they heard not the Voice of him that ſpake," that is, they did not underſtand what was ſpoken.

The Apoſtle now aroſe from the Earth; but found himſelf deprived of Sight, the reſplendent Brightneſs of the Viſion being too intenſe for Mortal Eyes to behold. His Companions therefore led him by the Hand to the City of Damaſcus, where he entered the Houſe of Judas, and remained there three Days without Sight, nor did he either eat or drink, but ſpent his Time in Prayer to the Almighty, beſeeching him to pardon the Sins of his paſt Life.

In the mean Time our bleſſed Saviour appeared in a Viſion to Ananias, a very devout and religious Man, highly eſteemed by all the Inhabitants of Damaſcus, tho' he profeſſed the Religion of the crucified Jeſus, commanding him to go into ſuch a Street of the City, and enquire in the Houſe of Judas, for one Saul of Tarſus, then offering up the moſt fervent Prayers to the Throne of Grace.

Ananias, who was ever ready to obey the Commands of the Moſt High, ſtartled at the Name, having heard of his bloody Practices at Jeruſalem, and what Commiſſion he was now come to execute in Damaſcus. He therefore ſuſpected that his pretended Converſion was nothing more than a Snare artfully laid for the Chriſtians. But our bleſſed Saviour ſoon removed his Apprenſions, by telling him that his Suſpicions were entirely deſtitute of Foundation; and that he had now taken him as a choſen Veſſel to preach the Goſpel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greateſt Monarchs of the Earth; acquainting him at the ſame Time with the great Things he ſhould do and ſuffer for the Sake of the Goſpel, what Chains and Impriſonments, what Racks and Scourges, what Hunger and Thirſt, what Shipwrecks, and at laſt even Death itſelf, he ſhould undergo.

This quieted the Fears of Ananias, who immediately obeyed the heavenly Viſion, repaired to the Houſe of Judas, and laid Hands upon Saul, ſaying, "That Jeſus who appeared to thee in the Way hath ſent me to reſtore thy Sight, and, by the infuſion of his Spirit, to give thee the Knowledge of thoſe Truths which thou haſt blindly and ignorantly perſecuted; but who now is willing to receive thee by Baptiſm into his Church, and make thee a Member of his Body." This Speech was no ſooner pronounced, than there fell from his Eyes thick Films reſembling Scales, and he received his Sight; and after Baptiſm converſed freely with the Chriſtians of Damaſcus. Nor did he only converſe with them; he alſo, to the great Aſtoniſhment

niſhment of the whole Church, preached the Goſpel to thoſe Chriſtians he came down with an Intention to deſtroy, boldly aſſerting, that Jeſus was the Chriſt the Son of God; and proving it to the Jews with ſuch demonſtrative Evidence, that they were confounded, and found it impoſſible to anſwer him.

CHAP. II.

The Tranſactions of St. Paul from his Converſion, till the Council held at Jeruſalem.

ST. Paul did not ſtay long at Damaſcus after his Converſion; nor did he return to Jeruſalem; but being commanded to preach the Goſpel to the Gentiles, he retired into Arabia Petræa, where he received a full Revelation of all the Myſteries of Chriſtianity; for he himſelf declares that he converſed not with Fleſh and Blood. And having preached in ſeveral Parts of that Country ſome Time, he returned again to Damaſcus, applying himſelf with the utmoſt Aſſiduity to the great Work of the Miniſtry, frequenting the Synagogues there, powerfully confuting the Objections commonly made by the Deſcendants of Jacob againſt Jeſus of Nazareth and converting great Numbers of Jews and Gentiles.

He was indeed remarkably zealous in his preaching, and bleſſed with a very extraordinary Method of reaſoning, whereby he proved the fundamental Points of Chriſtianity beyond Exception. This irritated the Jews to the higheſt Degree; and at length, after two or three Years continuance in thoſe Parts, they found Means to prevail on the Governor of Damaſcus to have him put to Death. But they knew it would be difficult to take him, as he had ſo many Friends in the City; they therefore kept themſelves a continual Watch, ſearched all the Houſes where they ſuppoſed he might conceal himſelf, and alſo obtained a Guard from the Governor to obſerve the Gates, in Order to prevent his eſcaping from them.

In this Diſtreſs his Chriſtian Friends were far from deſerting him: they tried every Method that offered to procure his Eſcape; but finding it impoſſible for him to paſs through either of the Gates of the City, they let him down from one of their Houſes through a Window into a Baſket, over the Wall, by which Means the cruel Deſigns of his Enemies were rendered abortive.

Having thus eſcaped from his malicious Perſecutors, he repaired to Jeruſalem, and on his Arrival, addreſſed himſelf

himſelf to the Church. But they knowing well the former Temper and Principles of this great Perſecutor, ſhunned his Company, till Barnabas brought him to Peter, who was not yet caſt into Priſon, and to James the Lord's Brother, Biſhop of Jeruſalem, informing them of his miraculous Converſion, and that he had preached the Goſpel with the greateſt Boldneſs in the Synagogue of Damaſcus; upon which they gladly received him, and familiarly entertained him fifteen Days.

During this Interval he was remarkably aſſiduous in preaching the Goſpel of the Son of God, and confuting the Helleniſt Jews with the greateſt Courage and Reſolution. But Snares were ſoon laid for him, as Malice can as eaſily ceaſe to be, as to remain inactive.

And being warned by God in a Viſion, that his Teſtimony would not be received at Jeruſalem, that therefore it was neceſſary for him to depart and preach the Goſpel to the Gentiles. Accordingly, being conducted by the Brethren to Cæſarea Philippi, he ſet ſail for Tarſus, his native City; from whence he was ſoon after brought by Barnabas to Antioch, to aſſiſt him in propagating Chriſtianity in that City. In this Employment he ſpent one whole Year, and had the pleaſure of ſeeing the Goſpel flouriſh in a very remarkable Manner.

In this City it was that the Diſciples firſt acquired the Name of Chriſtians, for before they were ſtiled Nazarenes; but this Appellation ſoon prevailed all over the World, and the former was, in a few Ages, almoſt intirely forgotten.

About this Time a terrible Famine, foretold by Agabus, happened in ſeveral Parts of the Roman Empire, particularly Judea, which induced the Chriſtians at Antioch to compaſſionate the Miſeries of their Brethren at Jeruſalem; and accordingly raiſed conſiderable Contributions for their Relief, which they ſent to the Capital of Judea by the Hands of Barnabas and Saul, who immediately after executing their Commiſſion returned to Antioch. But while they were performing the publick Exerciſes of Religion, it was revealed to them by the Holy Ghoſt, that they ſhould ſet apart Barnabas and Saul, to preach the Goſpel in other Places; which was accordingly done, and they were immediately deputed for that Service by Prayer, Faſting, and the Impoſition of Hands.

The firſt Place they viſited was Seleucia, where they did not continue long, but Sailed for Cyprus; and at Salamis, a great City in that Iſland, they preached in the Synagogue of the Jews. From hence they removed to Paphos, the Reſidence of Sergius Paulus, the proconſul of the Iſland, a Man of great Wiſdom and Prudence, but miſerably ſeduced by the wicked Artifices of Bar-Jeſus, a Jewiſh Impoſture, who ſtilling himſelf Elymas, or the Magician, vehemently oppoſed the Apoſtles, and kept the Proconſul from embracing the Faith.

The Proconſul, however, called for the Apoſtles, who, after ſeverely checking Elymas for his malicious Oppoſition to the Truth, told him the Divine Vengeance was now ready to ſeize upon

upon him; and immediately he was deprived of his Sight. The Vengeance of the Almighty obſerving in this Puniſhment a remarkable Proportion in depriving him of his bodily Eyes, who had ſo wilfully and maliciouſly ſhut thoſe of his Mind againſt the Light of the Goſpel, and alſo endeavoured to keep others in Darkneſs and Ignorance. This Miracle convinced the Proconſul of the Truth of the Doctrines taught by the Apoſtles, and made him a Convert to the Faith.

St. Paul, after this remarkable Succeſs in Cyprus, repaired to Phrygia in Pamphilia, and taking Titus with him in the Room of Mark, who was gone to Jeruſalem, travelled to Antioch, the Metropolis of Piſidia. Soon after their arrival, they entered the Synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath Day, and after the reading of the Law, Paul being invited by the Rulers of the Synagogue, delivered himſelf in the following Manner: "Hearken, all ye Deſcendants of Jacob, and ye that fear the Almighty, to the Words of my Mouth. The God of Iſrael made Choice of our Fathers, and loved them, when they had no City of their own to dwell in, but were Strangers and Slaves in Egypt, bringing them from thence with a mighty Hand, and a ſtretched-out Arm; fed them in the Wilderneſs forty Years, and would not ſuffer his Anger to ariſe againſt them, though they often provoked him in the Deſert. On their Arrival in the Land he promiſed their Fathers, he deſtroyed the Nations that inhabited it, and placed them in that fruitful Country; dividing it to them by Lot.

"When they were ſettled in the Land he gave them Judges during four hundred and fifty Years, till Samuel the Prophet. But on their deſiring a King, he placed over them Saul the Son of Cis a Benjamite, who reigned about forty Years. And after his Death he placed David on the Throne of Iſrael, giving him this Teſtimony," "I have found David the Son of Jeſſe, a Man after mine own Heart, which ſhall fulfil all my will." And according to his Promiſe the Almighty hath raiſed up to the Sons of David a Saviour Jeſus, which is Chriſt the Lord. The baptiſm of Repentance having been preached before his coming by John. And as his Fore-runner executed his Office, he aſked his Followers, "whom think ye that I am?" You muſt not miſtake me for the Meſſiah; he will ſoon follow me: but am I not unworthy to perform the meaneſt Office for him?

"To you therefore, ye Deſcendants of Abraham, and all others who fear the Almighty, "is this Word of Salvation ſent." For the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and Rulers of Iſrael, being ignorant of him, and the Voices of the Prophets, though read every Sabbath in their Synagogues, fulfilled their Predictions by condemning the immaculate Son of the Moſt High. They found indeed no Fault in him, though they earneſtly deſired Pilate that he might be ſlain.

"When every Thing that had been written by the Prophets concerning him was fulfilled, they took him from the Tree, and depoſited his Body in the Chambers of the Grave. But Death

had no Power to detain him; his Almighty Father raiſed him from the Habitations of the dead. After which, he was ſeen during many Days by his Diſciples who attended him from Galilee, and are the Witneſſes choſen by Omnipotence, of theſe great and miraculous Works. And we now declare unto you glad Tidings, namely, That the Promiſe made by the Almighty to our Forefather, he hath performed to us their Children by raiſing Jeſus from the dead. The Prophet David alſo ſaid, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee. He alſo foretold, that he ſhould return from the Chambers of the Duſt, and no more be ſubject to Corruption: I will give him, ſaid he, the ſure Mercies of David. And again, Thou ſhalt not ſuffer thine Holy One to ſee Corruption. Now this Prophecy muſt relate to the Meſſiah, for David himſelf, after he had ſwayed the Sceptre of Iſrael a certain Time fell aſleep, was depoſited in the Chambers of the Grave, and his Fleſh ſaw Corruption: but the great Son of David, whom the Almighty raiſed from the dead, never ſaw Corruption.

" Be it therefore known unto you, Men and Brethren, that through this Saviour is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of Sins. It is by his Merits we are juſtified from all Things, which was impoſſible by the Law of Moſes. Be careful, therefore, leſt what was foretold by the Prophets come upon you, " Behold ye Deſpiſers, and wonder and periſh: For I work a Work in your Days, a Work which you ſhall in no wiſe believe, though a Man declare it unto you."

This Speech of St. Paul had its deſired Effect. The Proſelyte Jews deſired it might be repeated the next Sabbath, and the Apoſtles perſuaded them to continue firm in the Belief of theſe Things. The next Sabbath, almoſt the whole City flocked to hear the Apoſtles; at which the Jews were filled with Envy, and contradicted Paul, uttering many blaſphemous Expreſſions againſt the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth. But their Oppoſition could not daunt the Apoſtles, who boldly declared, that our bleſſed Saviour had charged them to preach the Goſpel firſt to the Jews; but as they ſo obſtinately rejected it, they were now to addreſs themſelves to the Gentiles; who, hearing this, rejoiced exceedingly, magnifying the Word of the Almighty, and many of them embraced the Doctrines of the Goſpel. This increaſed the Malice and Fury of the Jews, who, by falſe and artful Inſinuations, prevailed on ſome of the more devout and honourable Women to bring over their Huſbands to their Party; by which Means Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the City. At which the Apoſtles departed ſhaking off the Duſt of their Feet, as a Teſtimony againſt their Ingratitude and Infidelity.

From Antioch they went to Iconium, the Metropolis of Lycaonia, a Province of the Leſſer Aſia, where they again entered into the Synagogue of the Jews, notwithſtanding the ill Treatment they had met with from the Jews in other Places; for ſo great was their Zeal for the Goſpel, that they were not to be deterred from preaching it by ill Uſage, however great.

great. Therefore, according to their uſual Method, they again began their Preaching in the Aſſembly of the Iſraelites; and the Almighty ſo far aſſiſted their Endeavours, that many, both Jews and Proſelytes, believed. Their Succeſs encouraged them to continue a conſiderable Time in this City, to inſtruct the Converts, and confirm their Faith by Miracles. But though they had gained a conſiderable Part of the City to the Faith, yet many continued in their Infidelity: The old Leaven of Jewiſh Malice began again to ferment, and the unbelieving Jews, having ſtirred up the Gentiles againſt the Apoſtles, at laſt prevailed on the Multitude to ſtone them. But the Apoſtles having timely Notice of their Deſign, fled from the City and travelled to Lyſtra, where they preached the Goſpel to the Inhabitants, and thoſe who dwelt in the adjacent Country.

Among the Converts at Lyſtra, was a Man who had been lame from his Mother's Womb, and never had walked. But Paul, perceiving that he had Faith to be ſaved, thought proper to add the cure of his Body to that of his Soul, knowing that it would not only be beneficial to him, but to all the reſt of the Believers, by confirming their Faith. And that the Miracle might be wrought in the moſt conſpicuous Manner, he, in the midſt of the Congregation ſaid, in an audible Voice to the Man, "Stand upright upon thy Feet." And the Words were no ſooner pronounced, than his Strength was at once reſtored, and he leaped up and walked.

The People who beheld this Miracle well knew, that it was not wrought by any human Power; but having been initiated into the ſuperſtitious Cuſtoms of the Heathens, cried out, in the Speech of Lycaonia, "The Gods are come down to us in the Likeneſs of Men." And accordingly they called Barnabas Jupiter, becauſe of his venerable Gravity, and Paul Mercury from his Eloquence. Nor was it long before the whole City reſounded with Acclamations; ſo that almoſt all the Inhabitants gathered themſelves together, and preceeded by the Prieſt of Jupiter, and Oxen dreſſed in Garlands, they came to the Houſe where the Apoſtles were, intending to do Sacrifice to them. But as ſoon as Barnabas and Paul underſtood their Intentions, they were greatly affected at this ſuperſtitious Attempt; and rending their Clothes to expreſs their Grief and Abhorrence of the Action, ran to them, crying out, "Ye Men of Lyſtra, ye are miſtaken in the Object of your Worſhip; for though we have done many Miracles in the Name, and by the Power of Chriſt, yet we are no more than Men, and ſubject to the ſame Paſſions with yourſelves, and preach unto you the glad Tidings of Salvation, that ye may forſake the Vanities of this World, and turn to the living God, who created the Heaven and the Earth, the Sea, and all the Creatures they Contain. This omnipotent Being ſuffered all Nations formerly to walk in their own Ways, though he never left himſelf without Witneſs doing the greateſt Good to the

Children of Men; it is he that ſendeth Rain from Heaven, and crowneth the Year with fruitful Seaſons, filling our Hearts with Joy and Gladneſs."

This Argument of the Apoſtles had the deſired Effect; and the People were at laſt, though with Difficulty, perſuaded to lay aſide their intended idolatrous Sacrifice. And ſurely no Argument could be more proper to affect the Minds of his Audience. Is it poſſible to ſurvey the ſeveral Parts of the Creation, and not diſcover in every Place, evident Traces of an infinite Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs? Who can contemplate the Heavens, and not diſcern the Wiſdom of Omnipotence, adorning in the moſt beautiful Manner thoſe lofty Regions? Behold the Sun, how juſtly is that Source of Light and Heat, placed in the Center of the planetary Choir, that each may enjoy its deſtined Share of his prolific Beams; ſo that the Earth is not burnt by a too near an Approach, nor chilled by the northern Blaſts from too great a Receſs; but impregnated with Fruits and Flowers, by the happy Influence of a vital Heat, and crowned with luxuriant Plenty by the benign Influences of the Seaſons. Who but an infinite Being could launch theſe maſſive Globes through the immenſe Regions of Space, and confine their Motions to their reſpective Orbits? Who "poiſes the Balancings of the Clouds, that divides a Water-courſe for the overflowing of Waters, and a Way for the Lightning of the Thunder?" Who can "bind the ſweet Influences of Pleiades, or looſe the Bands of Orion?" Or who can "bring forth Mazaroth in his Seaſon, or guide Arcturus with his Sons?" Do theſe happen by chance? or by the ſecret appointment of infinite wiſdom? Who can contemplate the wonderful properties of the air, the great treaſury of vital Breath, and not reflect on the divine Wiſdom that formed it? If we ſurvey the Earth, we there diſcover the Footſteps of an Almighty Being, who "ſtretched the North over the empty Space, and hangeth the Earth upon nothing;" filling it with a great Variety of admirable and uſeful Creatures, and maintaining them all by the Bounty of his Hand. It is he that clothes the Graſs with a delightful, Verdure, that "crowns the Year with his loving Kindneſs," and cauſes "the Valleys to ſtand thick with Corn." It is he that "maketh the Graſs to grow upon the Mountains, and Herb for the Service of Man." He adorns the Lillies of the Field that neither toil nor ſpin, with a Glory that exceſs the Pomp and Grandeur of Solomon's Court.

"He ſhut up the Sea with Doors," and ſaid, "Hitherto ſhalt thou come and no farther, and here ſhall thy proud Waves be ſtayed." It is this Almighty Being that arreſts the Storm, and Smooths the tempeſtous Billows of the Deep; that delivereth out the Mariner from all his Troubles, and bringeth his Ship into the deſired Haven of Safety. How reaſonable, therefore, is it that we ſhould worſhip and adore this Omnipotent, this kind Creator, and not Transfer the Honours

nours due to him alone, to frail Mortals, much leſs to dumb Idols, the Works of Men's Hands.

The Apoſtles having perſuaded the People to deſiſt from the idolatrous Worſhip they would have paid them, continued their Labours in inſtructing the People, and planting in this City the Goſpel of the Son of God. But the Malice of the Jews ſtill purſued them; for ſome of theſe bigotted Iſraelites coming from Antioch and Iconium, exaſperated and ſtirred up the Multitude; ſo that thoſe very Perſons who could hardly be reſtrained from offering Sacrifice to them, now uſed them like Slaves, ſtoning them in ſo cruel a Manner, that Paul was thought to be dead, and as ſuch they dragged him out of the City; but while the Chriſtians of Lyſtra were attending on his Corpſe, probably in order to carry him to his Grave, he aroſe and returned with them into the City, and the next Day departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the Goſpel, and converted many; no Danger being able to terrify them from the Work of the Miniſtry, and publiſhing the glad Tidings of Salvation in every Place.

They did not, however, long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lyſtra, Iconium, and Antioch of Piſidia, confirming the Chriſtians of thoſe Places in the Faith, earneſtly perſuading them to perſevere, and not be diſcouraged with thoſe Troubles and Perſecutions which they muſt expect would attend the Profeſſion of the Goſpel. And that the Affairs of the Church might be conducted with more Regularity, they ordained Elders and Paſtors, to teach, to inſtruct, and to watch over them; and then left them to the Protection of the Almighty, to whoſe Care they recommended them by Prayer and Faſting.

After leaving Antioch, they paſſed through Piſidia, and came to Pamphylia; and after preaching the Goſpel at Perga, they went down to Attalia. Having thus finiſhed the Circuit of their Miniſtry, they returned back to Antioch in Syria, from whence they at firſt departed. Here they ſummoned the Church, and gave them an Account of their Miniſtry, the Succeſs it had met in theſe different Parts, and how great a Door had thus been opened for the Converſion of the Gentile World.

While St. Paul continued at Antioch, that famous Controverſy with regard to the Obſervation of the Jewiſh Ceremonies in the Chriſtian Diſpenſation was ſet on foot by certain Jewiſh Converts, to the great Diſturbance of the whole Church. And it was determined to ſend Paul and Barnabas to conſult with the Apoſtles and Church at Jeruſalem, that this Affair might be ſettled on the moſt ſolid Foundation. On their Arrival at Jeruſalem, they firſt addreſſed themſelves to Peter, James, and John, the Pillars of that Church, by whom they were kindly entertained, and admitted to the Right Hand of Fellowſhip. And perceiving by the Account given them by St. Paul, that the Goſpel of the Uncircumciſion was committed to him, as that of the Circumciſion was to Peter, they agreed that Peter ſhould

ſhould preach to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. This being determined, a Council was ſummoned, wherein Peter declared his Opinion, and Paul and Barnabas acquainted them with the great Things God, by their Miniſtry, had done among the Gentiles. A plain Evidence, that they were accepted by the Almighty, though uncircumciſed, as well as the Jews with all their legal Rights and Privileges. Accordingly it was unanimouſly determined, that the Gentiles were not under the Obligation of the Law of Moſes, and therefore, that ſome Perſons of their own Church ſhould be joined with Paul and Barnabas, to carry the Decrees of the Council to Antioch, for their fuller Satisfaction in this Matter.

CHAP. III.

The Tranſactions of St. Paul from the Synod at Jeruſalem, till his Departure from Athens.

ST. Paul and his Companions having received the decretal Epiſtle returned back to Antioch; and ſoon after Peter came down. On reading this Epiſtle in the Church, the Converts converſed freely and inoffenſively with the Gentiles, till ſome of the Jews coming thither from Jeruſalem, Peter withdrew his Converſation, as if it had been a Thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By ſuch a ſtrange Method of proceeding the Minds of many were diſſatisfied, and their conſciences very uneaſy. St. Paul, with the greateſt Concern, obſerved it, and publickly rebuked Peter, with that Sharpneſs and Severity his unwarrantable Practices deſerved.

Soon after this Diſpute, Paul and Barnabas reſolved to viſit the Churches they had planted among the Gentiles, and Barnabas was deſirous of taking with them his Couſin Mark: but this Paul ſtrenuouſly oppoſed, as he had left them in their former Journey. This trifling Diſpute aroſe to ſuch a Height, that theſe two great Apoſtles and Fellow-labourers in the Goſpel parted aſunder; Barnabas, taking Mark with him, repaired to Cyprus his native Country, and Paul having made Choice of Silas, and recommended the Succeſs of his Undertaking to the Care of Divine Providence, ſet forward on his intended Journey.

They firſt viſited the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, confirming them in the Faith, by their Inſtruſtions and Exhortations. Hence they ſailed to Crete, where Paul preached the Goſpel, and conſtituted Titus to be the firſt Biſhop and Paſtor of that Iſland, leaving

ing him to ſettle thoſe Affairs of the Church which Time would not permit the Apoſtle to ſettle himſelf. From hence Paul and Silas returned back into Cilicia, and came to Lyſtra, where they found Timothy, whoſe Father was a Greek but his Mother a Jewiſh Convert, and by her he had been brought up under all the Advantages of a pious and religious Education, eſpecially with Regard to the Holy Scriptures, which he had ſtudied with the greateſt Aſſiduity and Succeſs. This Perſon St. Paul deſigned for the Companion of his Travels, and a ſpecial Inſtrument in the Miniſtry of the Goſpel. But, knowing that his being uncircumciſed would prove a ſtumbling Block to the Jews, cauſed him to be circumciſed; being willing in lawful and indifferent Matters to conform himſelf to the Tempers and Apprehenſions of Men, in order to ſave their Souls.

Every Thing being ready for their Journey, St. Paul and his Companions departed from Lyſtra, paſſing thro' Phrygia and the Country of Galatia, where the Apoſtle was entertained with the greateſt Kindneſs and Veneration, the People looking upon him as an Angel ſent immediately from Heaven; and being by Revelation forbidden to go into Aſia, he was commanded by a ſecond Viſion to repair to Macedonia, to preach the Goſpel. Accordingly, our Apoſtle prepared to paſs from Aſia into Europe.

Here St. Luke joined them, and became ever after the inſeperable Companion of St. Paul, who, being deſirous of finding the ſpeedieſt Paſſage into Macedonia, took Ship with his Companions Silas, Luke, and Timothy, and came to Samothracia, an Iſland in the Ægean Sea, not far from Thrace; and the next Day to Neapolis, a Port of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis, they repaired to Philippi, the Metropolis of that Part of Macedonia, and a Roman Colony, where they ſtaid ſome Days.

In this City, Paul, according to his conſtant Practice, preached in a Proſeucha or Oratory of the Jews, which ſtood by the River's Side at ſome Diſtance from the City, and was much frequented by the devout Women of their Religion, who met there to pray and hear the Law. To theſe St. Paul preached the glad Tidings of the Goſpel; and by the Influence of the Holy Spirit converted many, eſpecially a certain Woman named Lydia, a Jewiſh Proſelyte, a Seller of Purple in that City, but a Native of Thyatira. This Woman, being baptized with her whole Family, was ſo importunate with St. Paul and his Companions to abide at her Houſe, that they were conſtrained to accept of her Entertainment.

During the Time of the Apoſtles reſiding in this City, they continued their daily Courſe of worſhipping at the ſame Oratory. And after ſeveral Days, as they were repairing to the ſame Place of Devotion, there met them a Damſel who had a prophetick Spirit of Divination, by whom her Maſters acquired very great Advantage. This Woman followed Paul and his Companions,

Companions, crying out, "Theſe Men are the Servants of the moſt High God, which ſhew unto us the Way to Salvation." Paul, at firſt took no Notice of her, not being willing to multiply Miracles without Neceſſity. But when he ſaw her following them ſeveral Days together, he began to be troubled; and in Imitation of his great Maſter, who would not ſuffer the Devil to acknowledge him, leſt his falſe and lying Tongue ſhould prejudice the Truth in the Minds of Men, commanded the Spirit, in the Name of Jeſus, to come out of her. The Devil with Reluctance obeyed, and left the Damſel that very Inſtant.

This miraculous Cure proving a great Loſs to her Maſters, who acquired large Gains from her Soothſaying, were filled with Malice and Envy againſt the Apoſtles; and by their Inſtigation the Multitude aroſe, and ſeizing upon Paul and his Companions, hurried them before the Magiſtrates and Governors of the Colony; accuſing them of introducing many Innovations which were prejudicial to the State, and unlawful for them to comply with, as being Romans. The Magiſtrates being concerned for the Tranquility of the State, and jealous of all Diſturbances, were very forward to puniſh the Offenders, againſt whom the whole Multitude teſtified; and therefore commanded the Officers to ſtrip them, and ſcourge them ſeverely as ſeditious Perſons.

This was accordingly executed; after which the Apoſtles were committed to cloſe Cuſtody, the Goaler receiving more than ordinary Charge to keep them ſafely; and he accordingly thruſt them into the inner Priſon, and made their Feet faſt in the Stocks. But the moſt obſcure Dungeon, or the pitchy Mantle of the Night, cannot intercept the Beams of divine Joy and Comfort from the Souls of ſuch pious Men. Their Minds were all Serenity, and at Midnight they prayed and ſung Praiſes ſo loud, that they were heard in every Part of the Priſon. Nor were their Prayers offered to the Throne of Grace in vain: An Earthquake ſhook the Foundations of the Priſon, opened the Doors, looſed the Chains, and ſet the Priſoners at Liberty. This Convulſion of Nature rouſed the Gaoler from his Sleep; and concluding from what he ſaw, that all his Priſoners were eſcaped, was going to put a Period to his Life; but Paul obſerving him, haſtily cried out, "Do thyſelf no Harm, for we are all here." The Keeper was now as greatly ſurpriſed at the Goodneſs of the Apoſtles, as he was before terrified at the Thoughts of their Eſcape: And calling for a Light, he came immediately into the Preſence of the Apoſtles, fell down at their Feet, took them from the Dungeon, brought them into his own Houſe, waſhed their Stripes, and begged of them to inſtruct him in the Knowledge of that God who was ſo mighty to ſave.

St. Paul readily granted his Requeſt, and replied, That, if he believed in Jeſus Chriſt, he might be ſaved, with his whole Houſe. Accordingly the Goaler, with with all his Family, were, after a compitent Inſtruction, baptized,

Jeſus Chriſt, he might be ſaved, with his whole Houſe. Accordingly the Gaoler, with all his Family, were, after a competent Inſtruction, baptized, and received as Members of the Church of Chriſt. How happy a Change does the Doctrine of the Goſpel make in the Minds of Men! How does it ſmooth the roughest Tempers, and inſtill the ſweeteſt Principles of Civility and Good-nature into the Minds of Men! He who, but a few Moments before, tyrannized over the Apoſtles with the moſt cruel Uſage, now treats them with the greateſt Reſpect, and the higheſt Marks of Kindneſs.

As ſoon as it was Day, the Magiſtrates, either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done as too harſh and unjuſtifiable, ſent their Serjeant to the Gaoler with Orders to diſcharge the Apoſtles. The Gaoler joyfully delivered the Meſſage and bid them depart in Peace; but Paul, that he might make the Magiſtrates ſenſible what Injury they had done them, and how unjuſtly they had puniſhed them without Examination or Trial, ſent them Word, that, as they had thought proper to ſcourge and impriſon Romans, contrary to the Laws of the Empire, he expected they ſhould come themſelves, and make them ſome Satisfaction.

The Magiſtrates were terrified at this Meſſage; well knowing how dangerous it was to provoke the formidable Power of the Romans, who never ſuffered any Freeman to be beaten uncondemned; they came therefore to the Priſon, and very ſubmiſſively intreated the Apoſtles to depart without any further Diſturbance. This ſmall Recompence for the cruel Uſage they had received was accepted by the meek Followers of the Bleſſed Jeſus; they left the Priſon, and retired to the Houſe of Lydia, where they comforted their Brethren with an Account of their Deliverance, and departed; having laid the Foundation of a very eminent Church, as appears from St. Paul's Epiſtle to the Philippians.

Leaving Philippi, Paul and his Companions continued their Journey towards the Weſt, till they came to Theſſalonica, the Metropolis of Macedonia, about an hundred and twenty Miles from Philippi. On their Arrival at Theſſalonica, Paul, according to his Cuſtom, went into the Synagogue of the Jews, and preached unto his Countrymen; the ungrateful Uſage he had met with in other Places, not diſcouraging him from perſevering in ſo glorious a Work. His Doctrine however was ſtrenuouſly oppoſed by the Jews, who would not allow Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, becauſe of his ignominious Death.

During the Stay of the Apoſtles at Theſſalonica, they lodged in the Houſe of a certain Chriſtian named Jaſon, who entertained them very courteouſly. But the Jews would not ſuffer the Apoſtles to continue at Reſt. They refuſed to embrace the Goſpel themſelves, and therefore envied its Succeſs, and determined to oppoſe its Progreſs. Accordingly they gathered together a great Number of lewd and wicked Wretches, who beſet the Houſe of Jaſon, intend-

ing to take Paul, and deliver him up to an incenſed Multitude. But in this they were diſappointed, Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the Chriſtians, and concealed in ſome other Part of the City. Their Fury however was rather exaſperated than leſſened at loſing their Prey; and, as they could not find the Apoſtles of the Bleſſed Jeſus, they determined to be revenged on Jaſon, who had concealed them. Accordingly they Seized on him with ſome others of the Brethren and carried them before the Magiſtrates of the City, accuſing them, as they had before done the Apoſtles themſelves at Philippi, of diſturbing the Peace of the Empire, and ſetting Jeſus as a King in Derogation of the Emperor's Dignity and Authority. This Accuſation induced both People and Magiſtrates to be their Enemies; and tho' Jaſon was only accuſed of harbouring thoſe Innovators, yet the Magiſtrates could not be prevailed upon to diſmiſs him and his Companions, till they had given Security for their Appearance.

As ſoon as the Tumult was over, the Theſſalonians, who had been converted by them, ſent away Paul and Silas by Night to Peræa, a City about fifty Miles South of Theſſalonica, but out of the Power of their Enemies. Here alſo Paul's great Love for his Countrymen the Jews, and his earneſt Deſire of their Salvation, excited him to preach to them in particular: accordingly, he entered into their Synagogue, and explained the Goſpel unto them, proving out of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament the Truth of the Doctrines he advanced. Theſe Jews were of a more ingenuous and candid Temper than thoſe of Theſſalonica; and as they heard him with great Reverence and Attention expound and apply the Scriptures, ſo they ſearched diligently, whether his Proofs were proper and pertinent, and conſonant to the Senſe of the Texts he referred to. And having found every Thing to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and ſeveral Gentiles, following their Example, became obedient to the Faith, among whom were ſeveral Women of Quality. The News of this remarkable Succeſs was carried to Theſſalonica, and greatly incenſed the inveterate Enemies of the Goſpel there, who accordingly repaired to Beræa, and raiſed Tumults againſt the Apoſtles; ſo that Paul, to avoid their Fury, was forced to leave the Town; but Silas and Timotheus, either leſs known, or leſs envied, continued ſtill there.

Paul leaving Beræa under the Conduct of certain Guides, it was pretended he deſigned to retire by Sea out of Greece, that his reſtleſs Enemies might ceaſe their Perſecution; but the Guides, according to Paul's Order, brought him to Athens, and left him there, after receiving from him an Order for Silas and Timotheus to repair to him as ſoon as poſſible.

Athens was at this Time the moſt famous Academy of all Greece, and abounded with Philoſophers illuſtrious for their Learning. Among the

ſeveral

ſeveral Sects that now flouriſhed at Athens, the Stoics and Epicureans were the moſt remarkable for their Oppoſition to Chriſtianity. The Epicureans, becauſe they found their pleaſant and jovial Humour, and their looſe and exorbitant Courſe of Life, ſo greatly Checked and controuled by the ſtrict and ſevere Precepts of the Goſpel, and becauſe the Doctrines of it ſo plainly and poſitively aſſerted a Divine Providence governing the World, and at the laſt Day will reward or puniſh every Man according to his Works. The Stoics, on the other Hand, tho' pretending to Principles of great and uncommon Rigour and Severity, and ſuch as had the neareſt Affinity to the Doctrines of the Goſpel, yet they found them very different in Practice. That meek and humble Temper of Mind, that Modeſty and Self-denial, which the Goſpel ſo earneſtly recommends, and ſo ſtrictly requires, were directly oppoſite to the immoderate Pride and Ambition of that Sect, who were not aſhamed to compare their wiſe Men even to that of God himſelf.

While St. Paul continued at Athens, expecting the Arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate Survey of the City, which he found miſerably overrun with Superſtition and Idolatry. The Inhabitants were remarkably religious and devout: They had a great Number of Gods, whom they adored: Falſe, indeed, they were, but ſuch as they, being deſtitute of Revelation, accounted true: and ſo very careful were they, that no Deity ſhould want due Honour from them, that they had an Altar inſcribed, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. A great Variety of Reaſons are given for this Inſcription: ſome affirm that it was the Name which the Pagans generally gave to the God of the Jews; but others think that it included all the Gods of Aſia, Europe, and Africa, beſides the unknown God.

Theſe ſuperſtitious Practices grieved the Spirit of the Apoſtle; he lamented to ſee ſo much Zeal and Devotion miſplaced, and flattered himſelf, if he could but direct it to its proper Object, it would be of eminent Service to the Church of Chriſt. Accordingly, he exerted all his Strength for their Converſion; diſputing on the Sabbath-days in the Synagogues of the Jews; and at other Times took all Opportunities of preaching to the Athenians the Coming of the Meſſiah to ſave the World.

This Doctrine was equally new and ſtrange to the Athenians; and though they did not perſecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching Jeſus was conſidered by the Epicurean and Stoic Philoſophers, as a fabulous Legend; and by the more ſober Part as a Diſcovery of ſome new Gods, which they had not yet placed in their Temples. And though they were not unwilling to receive any new Deities, yet as the Areopagus, the ſupreme Court of the City, was to judge of all Gods, to whom public Worſhip might be allowed, they brought him before thoſe Judges, to give an Account of his Doctrine.

Paul being placed before the Judges

of this high Aſſembly, readily gave them an Account of his Doctrine, in a grave and elegant Speech. Wherein he did not tell them they were horrible and groſs Idolaters, leſt he ſhould offend them, and thereby prevent them from liſtening to his Reaſons; but, having commended them for their religious Diſpoſitions, he took Occaſion from the Altar inſcribed to the unknown God, to make a proper Defence of his Doctrine. "I endeavour, ſaid he, only to explain that Altar to you, and manifeſt the Nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worſhip; which is the God that made the World, and all Things therein; and who being Lord of all, dwells not in Temples made with Hands, nor is to be worſhipped in lifeleſs Idols. As he is the Creator of all Things, he cannot be confined to the Workmanſhip of Man, whether Temples or Statues; nor ſtands in Need of Sacrifices, ſince he is the Fountain of Life to all Things. He made from one common Original the Whole Race of Mankind, and hath wiſely determined their Dependance on him, that they might be obliged to ſeek after him and ſerve him. A Truth perceivable in the darkeſt State of Ignorance, and acknowledged by one of your own Poets. If this be the Nature of God, it is ſurely the higheſt Abſurdity to repreſent him by any Image or Similitude. The Divine Patience hath been too much exerciſed already with ſuch groſs Abuſes in Religion; but now expects a thorough Reformation; having ſent his Son Jeſus Chriſt to make him known to the World, and at the ſame Time to inform them that he hath appointed a Day of general Judgment, when the Religion of Mankind ſhall be tried by the Teſt of the Goſpel, before his only begotten Son, who is appointed ſole Judge of quick and dead, and whoſe Commiſſion to that high Office hath been ratified by the Almighty in raiſing him from the Dead."

On his mentioning the Reſurrection, ſome of the Philoſophers mocked and derided him; others, more modeſt, but not ſatisfied with the Proofs he had given, gravely anſwered, "We would hear thee again of this Matter." After which Paul departed from the Court; but not without ſome Succeſs, for a few of his Auditors believed and attended his Inſtructions; among whom were Dionyſius one of the Judges, and Damaris, thought by ſome to have been his Wife. And it is generally believed that Dionyſius was afterwards conſtituted by St. Paul the firſt Biſhop of Athens.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Tranſactions of St. Paul at Corinth and Epheſus.

DURING St. Paul's Stay at Athens, Timothy, according to the Order he had received, came to him out of Macedonia; and brought an Account that the Chriſtians at Theſſalonica were under Perſecution from their Fellow-citizens ever ſince his Departure: at which St. Paul was greatly concerned, and at firſt inclined to viſit them in Perſon to confirm them in the Faith they had embraced; but being hindered by the Enemies to the Goſpel, he ſent Timothy to comfort them, and put them in Mind of what they had at firſt heard, namely, that Perſecution would be the conſtant Attendant on their Profeſſion.

On Timothy's Departure, St. Paul left Athens, and travelled to Corinth, a very populous Place, and famous for its Trade. Here he found Aquila and Priſcilla his Wife, lately come from Italy, having been baniſhed from Rome by the Decree of Claudius. And they being of the ſame rade he himſelf had learned in his Youth, he wrought with them, that he might not be burdenſome to the new Converts.

After ſome Stay in Corinth, the Apoſtle was joined by Silas and Timothy, and diſputed frequently in the Synagogue, reaſoning and proving, that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah. This exaſperated the Jews to the greateſt Degree, and what they could not conquer by Argument and Force of Reaſon, they endeavoured to carry by Noiſe and Clamour, blended with Blaſphemies and Revilings; the laſt Refuge of an impotent and baffled Cauſe. But St. Paul, to teſtify his Reſentment, ſhook his Garments, and told them, that ſince they were determined to pull down the Vengeance of Heaven upon their own Heads, he was abſolutely guiltleſs and innocent, and would henceforth addreſs himſelf to the Gentiles. Accordingly he left them, and repaired to the Houſe of Juſtus, a religious Proſelyte, where, by his Preaching and Miracles, he converted great Numbers to the Faith. Among which were Criſpus the chief Ruler of the Synagogue, Gaius, and Stephanus, who with their Families were baptized, and admitted Members of the Chriſtian Church.

But the conſtant Returns of Malice and Ingratitude are ſufficient to tire the largeſt Charity, and cool the moſt generous Reſolution: our Dear Redeemer, therefore, that the Apoſtle might not be diſcouraged by the reſtleſs Attempts and Machinations of his Enemies, appeared to him in a Viſion, and told him, that notwithſtanding the bad Succeſs he had hitherto met with, there was a large Harveſt to be gathered in that Place; that he ſhould not be afraid

fraid of his Enemies, but preach the Goſpel boldly and ſecurely, for that he himſelf would protect and preſerve him.

About this Time he ſeems to have Wrote his firſt Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, Silas and Timothy being lately returned from thence, and delivered the Meſſage for which he had ſent them thither. The principal Deſign of this Epiſtle is to confirm them in the Belief of the Chriſtian Religion, and excite them to perſevere in it, notwithſtanding all the Malice of their Enemies, and the Perſecutions they muſt expect to ſuffer, and to inſtruct them in the Duties of a Religious Life.

While the Apoſtle was thus employed, the Malice of the Jews was plotting his Deſtruction: but being for ſome Time diſappointed, their Malice changed into Fury, and they hurried the Apoſtle before the Tribunal of Gallio, elder Brother to the famous Seneca, and Proconſul of the Province, accuſing him of being an Innovator in Religion; and of endeavouring to introduce a Method of Worſhipping God contrary to the Law. Paul was ready to have made his Defence; but Gallio prevented him by telling his Accuſers, that if he had been guilty of any Injuſtice he would have heard their Complaint and redreſſed their Grievance; but as it was nothing but a Controverſy about Words and Names, he would have nothing to do with it. But the Jews continuing their Clamours, he commanded his Officers to drive them from the Tribunal; which was accordingly done, and ſome of the Townſmen ſeized upon Soſthenes one of the Rulers of the Synagogue, and beat him before the Judgment-ſeat, the Proconſul giving himſelf no concern about it. Thus were the Deſigns of the Apoſtle's Enemies rendered abortive; and Paul continued, without any farther Oppoſition, to preach the Doctrine of the Goſpel during a Year and a half, when he left the Church at Corinth, to viſit others he had planted in different Parts of Aſia.

During the Apoſtle's Stay at Corinth, he wrote his ſecond Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, to ſupply his Abſence. In this Epiſtle he again endeavours to confirm their Minds in the Truth of the Goſpel, and prevent their being ſhaken with thoſe Troubles, which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raiſing againſt them. And becauſe ſome Paſſages in his former Epiſtle, relating to the Deſtruction of the Jews had been miſunderſtood, as if the Day of the Lord was near at Hand, he rectifies theſe Miſtakes, and ſhews the Signs that muſt precede our Lord's coming to Judgment.

St. Paul, on his leaving the Church at Corinth, took Ship at Cenchrea, the Port of Corinth, for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priſcilla; and on his Arrival at Epheſus, he preached a while in the Synagogue of the Jews, promiſing to return to them, after keeping the Paſſover at Jeruſalem. Accordingly, he again took Ship, and landed at Cæſarea, and from thence travelled to Jeruſalem, where he kept the Feaſt, viſited the Church, and then repaired

repaired to Antioch. Here he ſtayed ſome Time, and then traverſed the Countries of Galatia and Phrygia, confirming the new converted Chriſtians, till he came to Epheſus.

During the Time he ſpent in this large Circuit, Providence took Care of the Churches of Epheſus and Corinth, by Means of one Apollos, an eloquent Jew of Alexandria, and well acquainted with the Law and Writings of the Prophets. This Man coming to Epheſus, though he was only inſtructed in the Rudiments of Chriſtianity, and John's Baptiſm; yet he taught with great Courage, and a moſt powerful Zeal. After being fully inſtructed in the Faith by Aquila and Priſcilla, he paſſed over into Acaia, being furniſhed with recommendatory Letters by the Churches of Epheſus and Corinth. He was of the greateſt Service in Acaia, in watering what Paul had planted, confirming the Diſciples, and powerfully convincing the Jews, that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah promiſed in the Scriptures.

While Apollos was thus employed, St. Paul returned to Epheſus, where he fixed his Abode for three Years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Ariſtarchus a Native of Theſſalonica, Timotheus and Eraſtus of Corinth, and Titus. The firſt Thing he did after his Arrival, was to examine certain Diſciples, "Whether they had received the Holy Ghoſt ſince they believed?" To which they anſwered, "That the Doctrine they had received, promiſed nothing of that Nature; nor had they ever heard, that ſuch an extraordinary Spirit had of late been beſtowed upon the Church." This Anſwer ſurpriſed the Apoſtle, who aſked them in what Name they had been baptized? Since, in the Chriſtian Form, the Name of the Holy Ghoſt was always expreſſed. They replied, that they had only received John's Baptiſm; which, though it obliged Men to repent, yet mentioned nothing expreſsly concerning the Holy Ghoſt, or his Gifts or Powers. Upon which the Apoſtle informed them, that though John's Baptiſm commanded nothing but Repentance, yet it tacitly implied the whole Doctrine of Chriſt and the Holy Ghoſt. When they heard this, they were baptized according to the Form preſcribed by Chriſt himſelf, that is, in the Name of the bleſſed Trinity; and after the Apoſtle had prayed and laid his Hands upon them, they received the Gifts of Tongues, and other miraculous Powers then common in the Church.

After this, he entered into the Jewiſh Synagogues, where for the firſt three Months, he contended and diſputed with the Jews, endeavouring with great Earneſtneſs and Reſolution to convince them of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion. But when inſtead of Succeſs, he met with nothing but Obſtinacy and Infidelity, he left the Synagogue, and taking thoſe with him whom he had converted, inſtructed them and others who reſorted to him, in the School of one Tyrannus, a Place where Scholars uſed to be inſtructed. In this Manner he continued to preach the Goſpel two whole Years;

Years; by which Means the Jews and Proſelytes, of the whole Proconſular Aſia, had an Opportunity of hearing the glad Tidings of Salvation. And becauſe Miracles are the cleareſt Evidence of a divine Commiſſion, the Almighty was pleaſed to teſtify the Doctrine which St. Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous Operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary Nature; for he did not only heal thoſe that came to him, but if Napkins or Handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the Sick, their Diſeaſes immediately vaniſhed, and the evil Spirits departed out of thoſe that were poſſeſſed by them.

About this Time the Apoſtle wrote his Epiſtle to the Galatians: for he had heard that ſince his Departure, corrupt Opinions had crept in among them, with Regard to the Neceſſity of obſerving the legal Rites; and that ſeveral Impoſtors had found Admittance into that Church, who knew no better Method of undermining the Doctrine he had planted there, than by villifying his Perſon, ſlighting him as an Apoſtle only at ſecond Hand, not to be compared with Peter, James, and John, who had familiarly converſed with Chriſt in the Days of his Fleſh, and been immediately deputed by him. In this Epiſtle, therefore, he reproves them with ſome neceſſary Severity, for their being ſo ſoon led out of the right Way, wherein he had placed them, and ſo eaſily ſuffered themſelves to be impoſed upon by the crafty Artifices of Seducers. He vindicates the Honour of his Apoſtleſhip, and the immediate receiving his Commiſſion from Chriſt, wherein he ſhews that he was not inferior to the very beſt of the Apoſtles. He largely refutes thoſe Judaical Opinions that had tainted and infected them; and in the Concluſion, inſtructs them in the Rules and Duties of a holy Life.

During St. Paul's ſtay at Epheſus, an Accident happened, which was attended with great Trouble and Danger. In this City was the celebrated Temple of Diana, a Structure ſo magnificent for Beauty, Riches, and Magnitude, that it was reckoned one of the ſeven Wonders of the World. But what increaſed its Fame and Reputation, was an Image of Diana kept there, which the idolatrous Prieſts perſuaded the People was made by Jupiter himſelf, and dropt down from Heaven; for which Reaſon it was held in great Veneration, not only at Epheſus, but throughout all Aſia. So that People procured Silver Shrines, or Figures of this Temple, of ſuch a Size as to carry in their Pockets, either for Curioſity, or to ſtir up their Devotion. This proved the Source of a great deal of Buſineſs to the Silverſmiths of Epheſus; of whom one Demetrius was the Chief. This Man plainly perceiving, that Chriſtianity tended to the ſubverſion of Idolatry, and conſequently to the Ruin of their gainful Employment, called all the Artiſts together, and pathetically repreſented to them, "How inevitably they muſt be reduced to a State of Poverty, if they ſuffered Paul to bring their Temple and

and Goddeſs into Contempt, by perſuading People, as he did, that they were no Gods which were made with Hands."

This Speech of Demetrius fired them with a Zeal which they could no longer contain; ſo that they cried out with one Voice, "Great is Diana of the Epheſians." They ſhould indeed have conſidered, that if their Goddeſs was able to defend herſelf againſt the Doctrines preached by Paul, neither ſhe nor the Temple were in any Danger; whereas if Paul was able to deſtroy their Gods, it was in vain for them to reſiſt him. But Intereſt and Superſtition meeting in the Minds of a bigotted Multitude, admitted of no Reaſon. They were all fired with a Zeal for their Goddeſs, and determined, if they could find Paul, to expoſe him to the Beaſts in the Theatre. The whole City was filled with the Tumult; and the Croud miſſing Paul, laid hold on Gaius and Ariſtarchus, two Macedonians of Paul's Company, and hurried them into the Theatre, with a Deſign to throw them to the wild Beaſts. Paul, who was at preſent in a Place of Security, hearing of the Danger to which his Brethren were expoſed, was very deſirous of venturing after them, in order to ſpeak in their Behalf; but was at laſt diſſuaded from it not only by the Chriſtians, but alſo by the Gentile Governors of the Theatrical Games, who were his Friends, and aſſured him, that he would only endanger himſelf without reſcuing his Friends.

The Noiſe and Confuſion of the Multitude, was now prodigious moſt of them not knowing the Reaſon for which they were come together; and therefore ſome cried one thing, and ſome another. In this Diſtraction Alexander, a Jewiſh Convert, was ſingled out by the Multitude, and by the Inſtigation of the Jews was going to make his Defence, in which, doubtleſs he would have laid the whole blame upon Paul. But the Multitude perceiving him to be a Jew, and therefore ſuſpecting he was one of Paul's Aſſociates, raiſed another outcry for near two Hours together, wherein nothing could be heard but "Great is Diana of the Epheſians." This Confuſion brought the Town-clerk, who kept the Regiſter of the Games, into the Theatre, to ſuppreſs, if poſſible, ſo uncommon a Tumult. And having, with great difficulty, obtained Silence, calmly and diſcreetly told them, That the World was ſufficiently acquainted with the Devotion paid by the Epheſians to the great Goddeſs Diana, and the Image which fell down from Jupiter; and therefore it was abſolutely needleſs for them to publiſh it at that Time. That if Demetrius and his Fraternity had any Thing to alledge againſt Paul and his Companions, the Courts were open, and they might bring their Accuſation againſt them. Or, if they were queſtioned with regard to the Breach of any of their Laws, the Cauſe ought to be heard in a regular Aſſembly. That they would do well to conſider this, and be quiet; having already rendered themſelves obnoxious to the Diſpleaſure of the Magiſtrates, if they ſhould think pro-

per to call them to an Account for that Day's Tumult.

This Diſcourſe had the deſired Effect; the Multitude were convinced that they had acted very improperly, and therefore repaired to their reſpective Habitations; and Gaius, Ariſtarchus, and Alexander were releaſed without any hurt. But the Eſcape of Paul was ſo very remarkable, that he mentions it as a miraculous Deliverance. "We had, ſays he, the ſentence of Death in ourſelves, that we ſhould not truſt in ourſelves, but in God who raiſeth the Dead, who delivered us from ſo great a Death." And in another Place he tells us, "he fought with Beaſts at Epheſus;" alluding, either to the Deſign of the enraged Multitude of throwing him to the wild Beaſts in the Theatre, tho' their Intention was not executed, or to the Manners of the People, who ſufficiently deſerved the Character of being ſavage and brutal in the higheſt Degree.

About this time, Paul was informed of ſome Diſturbances in the Church of Corinth, hatched and fomented by a Company of falſe Teachers, crept in among them, who endeavoured to draw them into Parties and Factions, by perſuading one Company to be for Peter, another for Paul, and a third for Apollos; as if the principal Part of Religion Conſiſted in being of this or that Denomination, or in a warm active Zeal to depreciate and oppoſe whoever is not of our own narrow Sect. It is a very weak and ſlender Claim, when a Man holds his Religion by no better Title than his having joined himſelf to ſuch or ſuch a Sect or Congregation, and is remarkably zealous to promote it; to be childiſhly and paſſionately Clamorous for ſome Perſons particular mode of Adminiſtration, or ſome particular Opinion; as if Religion rather conſiſted in curious Diſputes, or in ſeparating from our Brethren, than "in Righteouſneſs Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt." By theſe Means, Schiſms, and Factions broke into the Corinthian Church; whereby many wild and extravagant Opinions, and ſome of them ſuch as tended to undermine the fundamental Articles of Chriſtianity, were planted and had taken Root there. To cure theſe Diſtempers St. Paul wrote his firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians; wherein he ſmartly reproves them for their Schiſms and Parties, conjures them to Peace and Unity, corrects thoſe groſs Corruptions that had been introduced among them, and particularly reſolves thoſe many Caſes and Controverſies, wherein they had requeſted his Advice and Council.

Soon after Apollos, determining to go to Crete, together with Zenos, St. Paul ſent by them his Epiſtle to Titus, whom he had made Biſhop of that Iſland, and had left there for propagating the Goſpel. In this Epiſtle, he inſtructs him fully in the Execution of his Office, how to behave himſelf, and what Directions he ſhould give to others, in the ſeveral Relations and Ranks of Men, eſpecially thoſe who were to be advanced to Places of Office and Authority in the Church.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Tranſactions of St. Paul from his Departure from Epheſus, till his being arraigned before Felix.

NOT long after the Tumult at Athens, Paul called the Chriſtians together, and took his Leave of them with the moſt tender Expreſſions of Love and Affection. He had now ſpent almoſt three Years at Epheſus, and founded there a very conſiderable Church, of which he had ordained Timothy the firſt Biſhop. He firſt travelled about two hundred Miles Northward to Troas, before he took Ship, expecting to meet Titus there. But miſſing him he purſued his Voyage to Macedonia.

On his Arrival in Macedonia, he preached the Goſpel in ſeveral Places, even as far as Illyricum, now called Sclavonia. During this Journey he met with many Troubles and Dangers, "without were Fightings, and within were Fears." But God, who comforteth thoſe that are caſt down, revived his Spirits by the Arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleaſing Account of the good Effects his Epiſtle had produced at Corinth. This worthy Biſhop came thither with large Contributions from the Church at Corinth; and from the Example of thoſe liberal Chriſtians, St. Paul ſtirred up the Macedonians to imitate their Charity, intended to aſſiſt the poor Chriſtians at Jeruſalem.

During the ſtay of Titus in Macedonia, Paul wrote his ſecond Epiſtle to the Corinthians, and ſent it to them by Titus and Luke. In this Epiſtle he endeavours to rectify what his former Epiſtle had not effected, to vindicate his Apoſtleſhip from that Contempt and Scorn, and himſelf from thoſe Slanders and Aſperſions which the Seducers, who found themſelves laſhed by his former Letter, had caſt upon him; together with ſeveral other particular Caſes relating to the Church.

About this Time alſo, he wrote his firſt Epiſtle to Timothy, whom he had left at Epheſus, wherein he gives him large Directions how to carry himſelf, in the Diſcharge of that great Office and Authority in the Church, committed to his Care: Inſtructs him in the particular Qualifications of thoſe he ſhould make Choice of, as Biſhops and Miniſters in the Church. He likewiſe gives him Inſtructions with Regard to his giving Orders to Deaconeſſes, and inſtructing Servants; warning him at the ſame Time, againſt that peſtilent Generation of Hereticks and Seducers, that would ariſe in the Church.

During his ſtay in Greece, he went to Corinth, where he wrote his famous Epiſtle to the Romans, which he ſent by Phœbe, a Deaconeſs of the Church of Cenchrea, near Corinth His principal Intention in this Epiſtle

is, fully to ſtate and determine the great Controverſy between the Jews and Gentiles, with Regard to the Obligations of the Rights and Ceremonies of the Jewiſh Law, and thoſe principal and material Points of Doctrine depending upon it, namely, Chriſtian Liberty, the Uſe of indifferent Things, and the like. And, which is the chief Intention of all Religion, inſtructs them, and preſſes them to perform the Duties of a holy and pious Life, ſuch as the Chriſtian Doctrine naturally recommends.

St. Paul being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the Contributions to the Brethren at Jeruſalem, ſet out on his Journey; but being informed that the Jews had formed a Deſign of killing and robbing him by the Way, he returned back into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, from whence he went to Troas, where he ſtayed ſeven Days. Here he preached to them on the Lord's Day, and continued his Diſcourſe till Midnight, being himſelf to depart in the Morning. The Length of his Diſcourſe and Time of the Night, cauſed ſome of his Audience to be overtaken with Sleep, and among them a young Man named Eutychus, who fell from the third Story, and was taken up dead; but the Apoſtle, by his Prayer to the Throne of Grace, preſently reſtored him to Life and Health. How indefatigable was the Induſtry of this great Apoſtle! How cloſely did he tread in the Steps of his great Maſter, who "went about doing good." He preached, and wrought Miracles wherever he came! As a Maſter-builder, he either laid a Foundation, or raiſed the Superſtructure! He was "inſtant in Seaſon and out of Seaſon," and ſpared no Pains to aſſiſt the Souls of Men!

The Night being thus ſpent in holy Exerciſes, St. Paul took his Leave of the Brethren in the Morning, travelling on Foot to Aſſos, a Sea-port Town, whither he had before ſent his Companions by Sea. From thence they ſailed to Mytilene, a City in the Iſle of Leſbos. The next Day they ſailed from thence, and came over-againſt Chios, and the Day following landed at Trogyllium, a Promontory of Ionia, near Samos. The next Day they came to Myletus, not putting in at Epheſus, becauſe the Apoſtle was reſolved, if poſſible, to be at Jeruſalem on the Day of Pentecoſt.

On his Arrival at Myletus he ſent to Epheſus, to ſummon the Elders of the Church, and on their coming, reminded them of the Manner in which he had converſed among them; how faithfully and affectionately he had diſcharged the Offices of his Miniſtry, and how inceſſantly he had laboured for the Good of the Souls of Men: Adding, that he had never failed to acquaint them both in publick and private, with whatever might be uſeful and profitable to them; urging both the Jews and Gentiles to Repentance, and Reformation of Life, and a hearty Entertainment of the Faith of Chriſt: That now he was going up to Jeruſalem, where he was ignorant of what might befal him, except what had

had been foretold him by thoſe, who were endued with the prophetical Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; namely, that Afflictions and Impriſonment would attend him. But that this gave him no Concern, being willing to lay down his Life whenever the Goſpel required it, and fully determined to ſerve faithfully his great Lord and Maſter. "I well know, continued he, that ye will ſee my Face no more; but for my Encouragement and Satisfaction, ye yourſelves can bear me Witneſs, that I have not, by concealing any Part of the Chriſtian Doctrine, betrayed your Souls. And as for yourſelves, whom God hath made Biſhops and Paſtors of his Church, you ſhould be careful to feed, guide, and direct thoſe Chriſtians under your Inſpection, and be infinitely tender of the Welfare of Souls, for whoſe Redemption the bleſſed Jeſus laid down his own Life. All the Care therefore poſſible for you to uſe, is no more than neceſſary; for after my Departure, heretical Teachers will appear in the Church, to the great Danger of the Souls of Men, ſeeking by every crafty Method, and pernicious Doctrine, to gain Proſelytes to their Party, and by that Means fill the Church of Chriſt with Schiſms and Factions. Watch ye, therefore, and remember with what Tears and Sorrow, I have during three Years, warned you of theſe Things. And now I recommend you to the divine Favour and Protection, and to the Rules and Inſtructions of the Goſpel, which, if adhered to, will undoubtedly diſpoſe and perfect you for that State of Happineſs, which the Almighty hath prepared for good Men, in the Manſions of Eternity. You well know that I have from the Beginning dealt faithfully and uprightly with you; that I have no covetous Deſigns, or ever deſired the Riches of other Men; nay, I have laboured with mine own Hands, to ſupport me and my Companions; you ought therefore to ſupport the Weak, and relieve the Poor, rather than be yourſelves chargeable to others, according to that incomparable Saying of the great Redeemer of Mankind, "It is more bleſſed to give than to receive."

St. Paul having finiſhed his Diſcourſe, he kneeled down and joined with them in Prayer; when they all melted into Tears, and, with the greateſt expreſſions of Sorrow, attended him to the Ship; grieving in the moſt paſſionate Manner for what he had told them, "That they ſhould ſee his Face no more.

Paul, with his Companions, now departed from Myletus, and arrived at Coos, from whence they ſailed the next Day to Rhodes, two Iſlands in the Ægean Sea. From thence they came to Patara, the Metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another Veſſel bound for Tyre in Phænicia. On his Arrival, he viſited the Brethren there, and continued with them a Week, and was adviſed by ſome of them, who had the Gift of Prophecy, not to go up to Jeruſalem. But the Apoſtle would by no Means abandon his Deſign, or refuſe to ſuffer any Thing provided he might ſpread the Goſpel of his Saviour. Finding all Perſuaſions were in vain, they all accompanied

companied him to the Shore, where he kneeled down and prayed with them; and after embracing them with the utmoſt Affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next Day to Ceſarea. Here Paul and his Companions lodged in the Houſe of Philip the Evangeliſt, one of the ſeven Deacons ſet apart by the Apoſtles, and who had before converted the Samaritans. Philip had four Daughters all Virgins, who had the Gift of Prophecy.

During their Stay in this Place, Agabas, a Chriſtian Prophet, came thither from Judea, who taking Paul's Girdle, bound his own Hands and Feet with it; ſignifying by this external Symbol, that the Jews would bind Paul in that Manner, and deliver him to the Gentiles. Whereupon, both his own Companions and the Chriſtians of Ceſarea, earneſtly beſought him, that he would not go up to Jeruſalem. But the Apoſtle aſked them, if they intended by theſe paſſionate Diſſuaſives to add more affliction to his Sorrow? "For I am ready, continued he, not only to be bound, but alſo to die at Jeruſalem, for the name of the Lord Jeſus." When the Diſciples found that his Reſolution was not to be Shaken, they importuned him no farther, leaving the Event to be determined according to the Pleaſure of the Moſt High. And all Things being ready, Paul and his Companions ſet forwards on their Journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the Chriſtians, on their Arrival at Jeruſalem.

The next Day after their Arrival, Paul and his Companions went to the Houſe of St. James the Apoſtle, where the reſt of the Biſhops and Governors of the Church were met together. After mutual Salutations, the Apoſtle gave them a particular Account of the Succeſs with which God had bleſſed his Endeavours in propagating Chriſtianity among the Gentiles; for which they all joined in Thankſgiving to God; but withal told him that he was now come to a Place, where were many Thouſands of Jewiſh Converts, who were all zealous for the Law of Moſes, and who had been informed, that he taught the Jews whom he had converted, to renounce Circumciſion, and the Ceremonies of the Law. That as ſoon as the Multitude heard of his Arrival, they would all aſſemble to ſee how he behaved himſelf in this Matter: and therefore, to prevent Diſturbance, they thought it adviſeable for him to join himſelf with four Perſons, who were at that Time to accompliſh a Vow, and perform the uſual Rites and Ceremonies with them, and provide ſuch Sacrifices for them, as the Law, in that Caſe, required; and that as a Symbol of their diſcharging their Vow, they might ſhave their Heads; whereby it would appear, that the Reports that were ſpread concerning him were falſe and groundleſs, and that he himſelf ſtill obſerved the Rites and Orders of the Moſaical Inſtitutions. But with regard to the Gentile Converts, they required no ſuch Obſervances at their Hands, nor expected any Thing more from them in theſe indifferent Matters,

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than what had been before determined in the Synod formerly held at Jeruſalem. St. Paul, who in ſuch Caſes was willing " to become all Things to all Men that he might gain the more," conſented to their Councel; and taking the Perſons with him to the Temple, told the Prieſts that the Time of a Vow they had made being now expired, and having purified themſelves according as the Nature of their Caſe required, they were come to make the Offerings required by Law.

The ſeven Days in which thoſe Sacrifices were to be offered, being now almoſt ended, certain Jews from Aſia, finding him in the Temple, began to raiſe a Tumult, and laying hold on Paul, called to their Brethren the Jews to aſſiſt them, declaring that this was the Perſon, who every where preached Doctrines derogatory to the Jewiſh Nation, and deſtructive to the Inſtitutions of the Law, and the Purity of that ſacred Place, which he had now defiled, by bringing Greeks into the Temple; poſitively concluding, that becauſe they had ſeen Trophimus a Gentile Convert with him in the City, that he had alſo brought him into the Temple: ſo Apt is Malice to make any Suppoſition in order to draw from thence its own Concluſion. This Accuſation, tho' abſolutely Falſe, ſet the whole City in an Uproar, and ſeizing on the Apoſtle, they dragged him out of the Temple, when the Doors were immediately ſhut, to prevent his returning into that Holy Place. Nor had they failed of ſoon putting a Period to all his Sufferings and Troubles, had not Claudius and Lyſias, Commander of the Roman Garriſon in the Caſtle of Antonia, arrived with a Band of Soldiers to his Reſcue; and ſuppoſing, from the great Tumult of the Jews, that he was a more than ordinary Malefactor, loaded him with a double Chain, tho' he was as yet altogether ignorant, either of his Country, or the Crime he was accuſed of; it being impoſſible to obtain any ſatisfactory Anſwer from the Multitude, who called for nothing but his Death, following the Soldiers in ſuch a riotous Manner, that they were forced to carry the Apoſtle in their Arms, to ſecure him from the Rage and Violence of the People.

As they were going in this Manner towards the Caſtle, Paul aſked the Governor, whether he might have the Liberty of ſpeaking to him, who finding he underſtood the Greek Language, enquired of him whether he was not that Egyptian, who, a few Years before, had raiſed a Sedition in Judea, and headed a Party of four thouſand vile and profligate Wretches. To which the Apoſtle replied, that he was a Jew of Tarſus, a free Man of a rich and honourable City; and therefore begged of him, that he might have Leave to ſpeak unto the People. This the Roman Officer readily granted, and Paul, ſtanding near the Door of the Caſtle, made Signs that they ſhould hold their Peace, and began to addreſs them in the Hebrew Language; which engaged them to liſten with more Attention to the following Diſcourſe:

" Liſten, ye Deſcendants of Jacob, to

to a Perſon of your own Religion, and like yourſelves a Child of Abraham, born in Tarſus, and brought up in this City, at the Feet of Gamaliel, and fully inſtructed in the Law delivered by Moſes to our Fore-fathers, and formerly as zealous for the Temple Worſhip as ye are at preſent."

" Nay, I perſecuted unto Death all who believed in Jeſus, ſeizing on all I could find both Men and Women, and caſt them into Priſon."

" This the High-prieſt, and all our Elders well know; for from them I received a Commiſſion, and repaired to Damaſcus, to bring from thence to Jeruſalem all the Chriſtians in order to their undergoing an exemplary Puniſhment."

" But as I was purſuing my Journey, to execute this Commiſſion, and was arrived near Damaſcus, there appeared, about mid-day, a Light from Heaven, ſhining round about me."

" Terrified at ſo aweful an Appearance, I fell to the Ground, and heard a Voice ſaying unto me, " Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" "To which I anſwered, "Who art thou, Lord? And the Voice replied, " I am Jeſus of Nazareth whom thou perſecuteſt."

" During this Interval, my Companions were greatly terrified at the exceeding Light that ſurrounded me; but they did not underſtand the Words that were ſpoken from on high."

" After recovering from the Terror with which my Mind was filled, on ſeeing Jeſus ſo highly advanced above all earthly Power, I anſwered, " What ſhall I do Lord?" And he replied, "Ariſe and go into Damaſcus, and there it ſhall be told thee of all Things which are appointed for thee to do."

" The Brilliance of the glory deprived me of Sight; ſo that my Companions led me by the Hand to Damaſcus, where one Ananias, a Perſon well reſpected by all the Jews of that City, viſited me, and ſaid, " Brother Saul, receive thy Sight." And in a Moment my Eyes were opened, and I ſaw him ſtanding before me.

" When he ſaw that my Sight was reſtored, he ſaid to me, The Almighty God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, hath appointed thee to know his Will to ſee the great Meſſiah, the Holy One of God, and hear the Voice of his Mouth; for thou art choſen to be a Witneſs to all the Nations of the Earth of thoſe ſurpriſing Things thou haſt ſeen and heard. Why therefore tarrieſt thou here any longer? " Ariſe and be baptized, and waſh away thy Sins, calling on the Name of the Lord."

After this glorious Viſion, and miraculous Power of the Moſt High, when I was returned from Damaſcus to Jeruſalem, and Offering up my Prayers in the Temple, I fell into a Trance, and again ſaw the great Son of David, who ſaid unto me, Depart quickly from Jeruſalem; for the Sons of Jacob will refuſe to believe thy Teſtimony, concerning me. And I anſwered, Lord, they know how cruelly I uſed thy Saints and Followers; that I impriſoned and beat them in every City, and in every Synagogue. Nay, when they ſhed the Blood of thy Holy Martyr Stephen, I was alſo one of the Spectators; I conſented

ſented to his Death; I even kept the Raiment of thoſe that ſlew him.

"But he replied, Depart: I will ſend thee to Countries far remote; even to the Gentiles."

The Jews had till now liſtened with ſome Attention to his Speech; but, on his mentioning the Commiſſion he had received to preach the Goſpel to the Gentiles, their Fury knew no bounds; crying out, with one Voice, "Away with ſuch a Fellow from the Earth:" he is unworthy to be ranked among the Race of Mortals, or even to breathe the vital Air."

And as they thought Words too weak to expreſs their Fury, they threw off their Clothes, and filled the Air with Duſt, indicating their great Deſire of ſtoning him.

But the Captain of the Guard commanded him to be brought within the Caſtle, and that he ſhould be examined by Scourging, till he confeſſed the Reaſon of the uncommon Rage ſhewn againſt him by the People. Accordingly, the Lictor bound him, and was going to put the Orders he had received into Execution, when Paul aſked the Centurion that ſtood by, whether it was lawful to ſcourge a Citizen of Rome, before any Sentence had been paſſed upon him? The Centurion, inſtead of anſwering the Queſtion, repaired immediately to the Governor; deſiring him to take care how he proceeded againſt the Priſoner, becauſe he was a Roman. On this information, the Governor himſelf came into the Priſon, and aſked Paul, whether he was really a free Citizen of Rome? And being told he was, he anſwered, that he himſelf procured that great Privilege by a large Sum of Money: But Paul anſwered, "I was free born." On receiving this Account, the Governor commanded the Centurion not to ſcourge him, being terrified at what he had already done, in chaining a free Denizen of Rome.

The next Day he ordered his Chains to be taken off; and that he might thoroughly ſatisfy himſelf of the Cauſe of ſo unuſual a Tumult the preceding Day, ſummoned the Sanhedrim to meet and brought down Paul before them.

The Apoſtle being thus placed before the great Council of the Jews, told them, that in all the Paſſages of his Life, he had taken Care to govern his Actions by the ſevereſt Rules of Duty and Conſcience. "Men and Brethren, I have lived in all good Conſcience before God until this Day." How great is the ſecurity of a truly good Man! How ſtrong, though inviſible a ſupport does Innocence become in the greateſt danger! With how generous a Confidence does Virtue and Honeſty guard the Breaſt of a true Profeſſor of Chriſtianity! Nothing elſe indeed can lay a ſolid Foundation for Satisfaction and Tranquility when any Calamities overtake us; Religion and a good Conſcience fill the Breaſt with a heavenly Serenity, which all the little Accidents of this World, can neither ruffle nor diſcompoſe. And accordingly Seneca compares the Mind of a wiſe and good Man to the State of the upper Region, which is always calm and Serene.

But however this Expreſſion of St. Paul might tend to ſhew the true State of his Mind; the high-prieſt Ananias was ſo offended at it, that he commanded thoſe who ſtood next to him to ſtrike him in the face; at which the Apoſtle ſmartly replied, "God ſhall ſmite thee, thou whited Wall:" thou art placed on the Seat of Judgment to determine according to the Law, and commandeſt me to be ſmitten in direct Oppoſition to its Precepts." On which ſome of the Spectators replied, "It is not lawful to revile the High-prieſt of the Almighty." And Paul anſwered, "I did not know that Ananias was appointed by God to be an High-prieſt. But as he is inveſted with Authority, it is unjuſt to revile him, God himſelf having commanded, that "no Man ſhould ſpeak Evil of the Ruler of the People." And perceiving that the Council conſiſted partly of Sadducees and partly of Phariſees, he cried aloud "Men and Brethren, I am a Phariſee, the Son of a Phariſee, and am now brought before this Tribunal for aſſerting the Reſurrection from the Dead."

This Declaration threw the whole Court into Confuſion; the Phariſees, being zealous Patrons of that Article, declared the Priſoner innocent, and that in all probability he had received ſome Intimation from Heaven by an Angel, or the ſilent Whiſpers of the Holy Spirit; and if ſo, they in reality fought againſt Omnipotence himſelf, by oppoſing his Doctrine. While the Sadducees, who denied the Reſurrection, together with the exiſtence of either Angel or Spirit, ſtrenuouſly inſiſted that the Apoſtle was a turbulent Perſon, and ought to be puniſhed.

The Council being thus divided, their Diſſentions increaſed to that degree, that the Captain feared Paul would have been pulled in Pieces; and therefore took him from the Bar and carried him back to the Caſtle. But during the Silence of the Night, the great Redeemer of Mankind, to comfort his faithful Servant under all the Terrors he had ſuffered the two preceding days, appeared to him in a viſion, encouraging him to Conſtancy and Reſolution, aſſuring him, that as he had born Witneſs of him at Jeruſalem, he ſhould, notwithſtanding all the Malice and wicked Deſigns of his Enemies, live to bear his Teſtimony even in Rome itſelf.

The next Morning the Jews, whoſe Envy and Malice were increaſed by theſe dilatory Proceeding, determined to uſe a quicker Method of putting a period to his Life. In order to this, above forty of the moſt turbulent entered into a ſhocking Confederacy of killing him; ratifying it by an Oath, and the moſt bitter Execration that they would neither eat nor drink till they had put their inhuman Deſign in Execution. But ſuch vile Monſters would do well to remember, that a Being from whoſe Eye nothing can be concealed, and whoſe Power nothing can reſiſt, is privy to all their Actions, often renders their deſigns abortive, and will ſurely puniſh them for their baſe Attempts. Accordingly this Deſign, tho' probably concluded under the pitchy Mantle of the Night, was diſcovered

covered to St. Paul, by his Siſter's Son, and at the Requeſt of the Apoſtle told to the Governor himſelf, who immediately commanded two Parties of Horſe and Foot, to be ready by nine o'Clock that Night, in order to conduct St. Paul to Felix, the Roman Governor of that Province; to whom alſo he ſent an Account of the whole Proceedings of the Jews againſt the Priſoner; and at the ſame time ordered his Accuſers alſo to appear before the Roman Magiſtrate. Accordingly, St. Paul was conducted to Antipatris, and afterwards to Ceſarea, where the Letters being delivered to Felix, the Apoſtle was alſo preſented to him; and finding that he belonged to the Province of Cilicia, he told him that as ſoon as his Accuſers were come down, he would determine the Affair, and in the mean time commanded him to be ſecured in the Place called Herod's Hall.

CHAP. VI.

The Tranſactions of St. Paul from his firſt Trial before Felix, till his coming to Rome.

A Few Days after St. Paul's Arrival, Ananias the High-prieſt, with ſome others of the Sanhedrim, came to Ceſarea, accompanied by Tertullus their Advocate, who in a ſhort, but eloquent Speech, adorned with all the flattering and inſinuating Arts of Oratory, began to accuſe the Apoſtle, charging him with Sedition, Hereſy, and the Profanation of the Temple: That they would have ſaved him the Trouble of this hearing, by judging him according to their own Law, had not Lyſias, the chief Captain, violently taken him from them, and ſent both the Priſoner and them to Cæſarea.

The Orator having finiſhed his Charge againſt the Apoſtle, Felix told St. Paul, that he was now at Liberty to make his Defence. Accordingly he diſtinctly anſwered every Part of the Charge in the following Manner:

" I anſwer this Charge of the Jews with greater Satisfaction before thee, becauſe thou haſt for many Years been a Judge of this Nation. About twelve Days ſince, I repaired to Jeruſalem, to worſhip the God of Jacob. But I neither diſputed with any Man, nor endeavoured to ſtir up the People in the Synagogues or the City. Nor can they prove the Charge they have brought againſt me.

" This However, I readily confeſs, that after the Way which they call Hereſy, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers; firmly believing every Part of the Writings of Moſes and the Prophets; and at the ſame Time believe, as they themſelves alſo do, that

the Almighty will raiſe at the laſt Day, both the Juſt and unjuſt from the Dead. And according to this Faith, I am careful to maintain a clear and quiet Conſcience both towards God and Man."

"After I had ſpent ſome Years in diſtant Countries, I repaired to Jeruſalem, with the Alms I had collected in other Provinces, for the Poor of mine own Nation, and Offerings to the God of Jacob. And while I was performing the Duties of Religion, certain Aſiatic Jews found me in the Temple, purified according to the Law; but neither attended with a Multitude of Followers, or the leaſt Tumultuous Aſſembly. It was therefore neceſſary that the Jews ſhould have been here if they had any Thing to alledge againſt me. Nay, I appeal to thoſe of the Sanhedrim here preſent, if any Thing hath been laid to my Charge, except the Objections of the Sadducees who violently oppoſed me for aſſerting the Doctrine of the Reſurrection."

Felix having thus heard both Parties, refuſed to paſs any final Sentence, till he had more fully adviſed about it, and conſulted Lyſias the Governor of the Caſtle, who was the moſt proper Perſon to give an Account of the Sedition and Tumult; commanding, in the mean Time that St. Paul ſhould be kept under a Guard, but at the ſame Time enjoy the Liberty of being viſited by his Friends, and receive from them any Office of Friendſhip and Kindneſs.

Soon after this, Felix's Wife Druſilla, a Jeweſs, and Daughter of the elder Herod, came down to him at Ceſarea, in whoſe Preſence the Governor ſent for Paul, and gave him leave to explain the Doctrines of Chriſtianity. In this Diſcourſe, the Apoſtle took Occaſion particularly to inſiſt upon the great Obligation which the Laws of Chriſt lay upon Men to Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, to Sobriety and Chaſtity; urging at the ſame Time the ſevere and impartial Account that muſt be given at the Judgement of the great Day, when all Men ſhall be arraigned before the awful Tribunal of Omnipotence, for the Actions of their paſt Life, and be eternally puniſhed or rewarded according to their Works.

This Diſcourſe was wiſely adapted to the State and Temper of Felix. But Corroſives are very uneaſy to a guilty Mind. Men naturally hate whatever brings their ſins to Remembrance, and ſharpens the Sting of a violated Conſcience. But however diſagreeable theſe Truths may be, they cannot be heard without Confuſion; and accordingly, when St. Paul pathetically deſcribed the Terrors of the laſt Judgment, Felix trembled on his Throne; and was ſo greatly affected, that he cauſed the Apoſtle to break off abruptly, telling him that he would hear the Remainder of his Diſcourſe at a more convenient Seaſon.

And certainly Felix had ſufficient Reaſon to tremble, and his Conſcience to be ſenſibly alarmed at theſe Reflections; for he was a Man notoriouſly infamous for Rapine and Violence. Tacitus tells us, that he made his Will the Law of his Government, practiſing all Manner of

of Cruelty and Injuſtice. His Incontinence, Luxury, and Debauchery was remarkable; nor did he ſcruple to violate all the Laws of God and Man, to ſatisfy his unruly Paſſions. To theſe Qualities he added Bribery and Covetouſneſs; and therefore often ſent for our Apoſtle to diſcourſe with him, expecting he would have given him a conſiderable Sum for his Releaſe; having, in all Probability, heard that St. Paul had brought a large Quantity of Money to Jeruſalem. But finding no Offers were made him either by the Apoſtle himſelf or his Friends, he kept him Priſoner two Years; when he himſelf being diſcharged from his Office by Nero, he left Paul in Priſon, in order to gratify the Malice of the Jews, and engage them to ſpeak the better of his Government, after his Departure from Judea.

Felix was ſucceeded in the Government of the Province by Portius Feſtus, before whom at his firſt coming to Jeruſalem, the High-prieſt and Sanhedrim preferred an Indictment againſt Paul, deſiring that he might be ſent for up to Jeruſalem, in order to his Trial, intending to aſſaſſinate him by the Way. But Feſtus told them, that he was ſhortly going himſelf to Ceſarea; and that if they had any Complaint againſt Paul, they ſhould come down thither, and accuſe him. Accordingly, as ſoon as he was come to Ceſarea, he aſcended the Tribunal, where the Jews renewed the Charge they had before brought againſt Paul; but the Apoſtle ſoon cleared himſelf of every Part of the Charge, they not being able to prove any Thing againſt him. Feſtus, however, being willing to procure the Favour of the Jews, at his Entrance on the Government, aſked him whether he would go up and be tried before him at Jeruſalem? But the Apoſtle well knowing the Conſequences of ſuch a Propoſal, anſwered, "I am a Roman, and therefore ought to be judged by the Roman Law; and now ſtand before the Judgment-ſeat of Cæſar. I have done nothing againſt the Jews, a Fact thou thyſelf very well knoweſt to be true. If I have committed any Thing that deſerves Death, I am ready to die; but if not, no Perſon hath a Power to deliver me into the Hands of mine Enemies. I appeal unto Cæſar."

This Method of appealing was common among the Romans, and introduced to defend and ſecure the Lives and Fortunes of the Populace from the unjuſt Encroachments, and over-rigorous Severities of the Magiſtrates, whereby it was lawful in Caſes of oppreſſion to appeal to the People for Redreſs; a Thing more than once ſettled by the Sanction of the Valerian Law.

Some Time after St. Paul had appealed unto Cæſar, King Agrippa, who ſucceeded Herod in the Tetrarchate of Galilee, and his Siſter Bernice, came to Ceſarea to viſit the new Governor. Feſtus embraced this Opportunity of mentioning the Caſe of our Apoſtle to king Agrippa, together with the remarkable Tumult this Affair had occaſioned among the Jews, and the Appeal he had made to Cæſar. This Account excited the Curioſity of King Agrippa; and he was deſirous of hearing

hearing himſelf, what St. Paul had to ſay in his own Vindication. Accordingly, the next Day the King and his Siſter, accompanied with Feſtus the Governor, and ſeveral other Perſons of Diſtinction, came into the Court with a pompous and ſplendid Retinue, where the Priſoner was brought before them. On his appearing, Feſtus informed the Court, how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Ceſarea and Jeruſalem, to put the Priſoner to Death as a Malefactor; but having on Examination found him guilty of no capital Crime, and the Priſoner himſelf having appealed unto Cæſar, he was determined to ſend him to Rome; but was willing to have his Cauſe debated before Agrippa, that he might be furniſhed with ſome material Particulars to ſend with him; it being highly abſurd to ſend a Priſoner, without ſignifying the Crimes alledged againſt him.

Feſtus having finiſhed his Speech, Agrippa told Paul, he was now at Liberty to make his own Defence; and Silence being made, he delivered himſelf in the following Manner, addreſſing his Speech particularly to Agrippa.

"I conſider it as a peculiar Happineſs, King Agrippa, that I am to make my Defence againſt the Accuſations of the Jews, before thee; becauſe thou art well acquainted with all their Cuſtoms, and the Queſtions commonly debated among them: I therefore beſeech thee to hear me patiently.

"All the Jews are well acquainted with my manner of Life from my Youth, the greateſt Part of it having been ſpent with mine own Countrymen at Jeruſalem. They alſo know that I was educated under the Inſtitutions of the Phariſees, the ſtricteſt Sect of our Religion, and am now arraigned for a Tenet believed by all their Fathers; a Tenet ſufficiently credible in itſelf, and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, I mean the Reſurrection of the Dead. Why ſhould any Mortal think it either incredible or impoſſible, that God ſhould raiſe the Dead?

"I indeed thought myſelf indiſpenſibly obliged to oppoſe the Religion of Jeſus of Nazareth. Nor was I ſatisfied with impriſoning and puniſhing with Death itſelf, the Saints I found at Jeruſalem; I even perſecuted them in ſtrange Cities, whither my implacable Zeal purſued them, having procured Authority for that Purpoſe from the Chief Prieſts and Elders.

"Accordingly I departed for Damaſcus, with a Commiſſion from the Sanhedrim; but as I was travelling towards that City, I ſaw at Mid-day, O King, a Light from Heaven, far exceeding the Brightneſs of the Sun, encompaſſing me and my Companions. On ſeeing this awful Appearance, we all fell to the Earth; and I heard a Voice, which ſaid to me, in the Hebrew Language, Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me? It is hard for thee to kick againſt the Pricks? To which I anſwered, Who art thou Lord? And he replied, I am Jeſus whom thou perſecuteſt. But be not terrified, ariſe from the Earth: for I have appeared unto thee, that thou mighteſt be both a Witneſs of the Things thou haſt ſeen, and

and alſo of others which I will hereafter reveal unto thee. My Power ſhall deliver thee from the Jews and Gentiles, to whom now I ſend thee to preach the Goſpel; to withdraw the veil of Darkneſs and Ignorance; to turn them from Falſhood unto Truth, and from the Power of Satan unto God.

Accordingly, King Agrippa, I readily obeyed the heavenly Viſion; I preached the Goſpel firſt to the Inhabitants of Damaſcus, then to thoſe of Jeruſalem and Judea, and afterwards to the Gentiles; perſuading them to forſake their Iniquities, and, by ſincere Repentance, turn to the living God.

"These endeavours to ſave the Souls of ſinful Mortals, exaſperated the Jews, who caught me in the Temple, and entered into a Conſpiracy to deſtroy me. But, by the help of Omnipotence, I ſtill remain a Witneſs to all the human Race, preaching nothing but what Moſes and all the Prophets foretold; namely, That the Meſſiah ſhould ſuffer, be the firſt that ſhould riſe from the Chambers of the Grave, and publiſh the glad Tidings of Salvation, both to the Jews and Gentiles."

While the Apoſtle thus pleaded for himſelf, Feſtus cried out, "Paul, thou art mad; too much ſtudy hath deprived thee of thy Reaſon." But Paul anſwered, "I am far, moſt noble Feſtus, from being tranſported with idle and diſtracted Ideas; the Words I ſpeak are dictated by Truth and Sobriety. And I am perſuaded that King Agrippa himſelf is not ignorant of theſe Things; for they were tranſacted openly before the World. I am confident, King Agrippa, that thou believeſt the Prophets; and therefore muſt know that all their Predictions were fulfilled in Chriſt." To which Agrippa anſwered, "Thou haſt almoſt perſuaded me to embrace the Chriſtian Faith," And Paul replied, I ſincerely wiſh, that not only thou, but alſo all that hear me, were not almoſt, but altogether the ſame as I myſelf, except being Priſoners."

When Paul had thus ſpoken, the King and the Governor with the reſt of the Council, withdrew to confer privately together; and finding by the Accuſations brought againſt him, that he was not guilty by the Roman Law of any capital Offence, nor even of ſuch as deſerved Impriſonment, Agrippa told Feſtus, that he might have been ſet at Liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæſar; but an Appeal being once made, the Judge had no longer any Power either to abſolve or condemn, the Cauſe being entirely reſerved to the Cognizance of that Superior, to whom the Priſoner had appealed.

It being now finally determined that Paul ſhould be ſent to Rome, he was, with ſeveral other Priſoners of Conſequence, committed to the care of Julius, Commander of a Company belonging to the Legion of Auguſtus; and was accompanied in this Voyage by St. Luke, Ariſtarchus, Trophimus, and ſome other not mentioned by the ſacred Hiſtorian.

In September 56, or, according to others, 57, they embarked on board a Ship of Adramyttium, and ſailed to Sidon,

Sidon, where the Centurion courteouſly gave the Apoſtle leave to go on ſhore to viſit his Friends, and refreſh himſelf. After a ſhort ſtay they ſailed for Cyprus, and arrived oppoſite the Fair-Havens, a Place near Myra a City of Lycia. Here the Seaſon being far advanced, and Paul foreſeeing it would be a dangerous Voyage, perſuaded them to put in and Winter there. But the Roman Centurion preferring the Opinion of the Maſter of the Ship, and the Harbour being at the ſame time incommodious, reſolved, if poſſible, to reach Phænice, a Port of Crete, and winter there. But they ſoon found themſelves diſappointed; for the fine ſoutherly Gale, which had favoured them for ſome Time, ſuddenly changed into a ſtormy and tempeſtuous Wind at North-eaſt, which blew with ſuch Violence that the Ship was obliged to ſail before it; and to prevent her foundering, they threw over-board the principal Part of her loading.

In this deſperate and uncomfortable Condition, they continued fourteen Days, neither Sun nor Star appearing for great Part of the Time. During this Confuſion the Apoſtle put them in mind how prepoſterouſly they had acted in not liſtening to his Advice; but at the ſame Time told them that the God whom he ſerved and worſhipped, had the laſt Night ſent an Angel to him, with Aſſurance, that, notwithſtanding their preſent Danger, not one of their Lives ſhould be loſt, though the Ship ſhould be wrecked on a certain Iſland.

On the fourteenth Night, the Sailors upon ſounding, found they were near ſome Coaſt; and therefore, to avoid the Rocks thought proper to come to an Anchor, till the Morning might give them better information. In the mean Time the Seaman, who beſt underſtood the Danger, were preparing to get into the Boat to ſave themſelves: which Paul perceiving, told the Captain, that unleſs they all ſtayed in the Ship, not one of them could be ſaved: whereupon the Soldiers cut the Ropes, and let the Boat fall overboard into the Sea.

During the Time they continued at Anchor waiting for the Light of the Morning, St. Paul prevailed upon them to eat and refreſh themſelves, having faſted a long Time, aſſuring them they ſhould all Eſcape. When they had finiſhed their repaſt they lightened the Ship of thoſe Goods which ſtill remained on board, and endeavoured to put into a ſmall Creek they had diſcovered at a little Diſtance. But falling into a Place where two Seas met, the Ship ran a-ground, the fore-part remaining immoveable, but the after-part was demoliſhed by the Waves. Awakened with the Danger they were in, the Soldiers were Deſirous of killing the Priſoners, leſt any of them ſhould make their Eſcape; but the Centurion, willing to ſave Paul, refuſed his Conſent, commanding that every one ſhould ſhift for himſelf in the beſt Method he could. Accordingly, ſome by ſwimming, and others by broken Pieces of the Ship, they all to the Number of two hundred threeſcore and and ſixteen got ſafe on ſhore.

The Country on which they were caſt,

caſt, was, as St. Paul had foretold, an Iſland called Melita, now Malta, ſituated in the Libyan Sea, between Syracuſe and Africa.. Here they met with great Civility from a barbarous People, and the plain Acknowledgments of a divine Juſtice written on the naked and uninſtructed Minds of Men. They treated them with great Humanity, entertaining them with all the neceſſary Accommodations; but while St. Paul was laying a few Sticks on the Fire, a Viper, enlivened by the heat, came from among the Wood and faſtened on his Hand. On ſeeing this, the Inhabitants of the Iſland concluded, that he was certainly ſome notorious Murderer, whom the divine Vengeance, tho' it ſuffered him to eſcape the Sea, had reſerved for a more publick and ſolemn Execution. But when they ſaw him ſhake off the venomous Creature into the Fire, and no manner of harm enſue, they changed their Sentiments, and cried out, "that he was a God:" ſo eaſily are light and credulous Minds tranſported from one extreme to another.

Not far from the Place where they were ſhipwrecked was the Reſidence of Publius the Governor of the Iſland, who entertained this unfortunate Company with great Hoſpitality for three Days; in acknowledgment of which St. Paul by his Prayers, and the Impoſition of his Hands, recovered his Father from a Fever and a Bloody-flux; and reſtored ſeveral others of the Inhabitants, afflicted with different Diſeaſes, to their former Health and Strength; in conſequence of which they not only ſhewed him the greateſt Marks of their Eſteem, but furniſhed both him and his Company with all the Neceſſaries proper for the reſt of their Voyage.

After three Months ſtay in this Iſland, the Centurion with the Charge went on board the Caſtor and Pollux, a Ship of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuſe, where they tarried three Days; ſailed thence to Regium, and ſo to Puteoli, where they landed; and finding ſome Chriſtians there, ſtaid at their Requeſt a Week with them, and then went forward on their Journey to Rome. The Chriſtians of the City, hearing of the Apoſtle's coming, went to meet him as far as the Three-Taverns, about thirty Miles from Rome, and others as far as the Apii-forum, fifty one Miles diſtant from the Capital. They kindly embraced each other, and the Liberty he ſaw the Chriſtians enjoyed at Rome, greatly tended to enliven the Spirits of the Apoſtle. By theſe Chriſtians he was conducted in a Kind of Triumph into the City, where, at their Arrival, the reſt of the Priſoners were delivered to the Captain of the Guard, and by him diſpoſed in the common Priſon; but St. Paul, probably by the Interceſſion of Julius, was permitted to reſide in a private Houſe, with only a Soldier for his Ward.

CHAP. VII.

The Tranſactions of St. Paul, from his arrival at Rome, till his Martyrdom.

THREE Days after St. Paul arrived at Rome, he ſent for the Heads of the Jewiſh Conſiſtory there, and related to them the Cauſe of his coming, in the following Manner: "Tho' I have been guilty of no Violation of the Laws of our Religion, yet I was delivered by the Jews at Jeruſalem to the Roman Governors, who more than once would have acquitted me as innocent of any capital Offence; but, by the Perverſeneſs of my Perſecutors, I was obliged to appeal unto Cæſar; not that I had any Thing to accuſe my Nation of: I had recourſe to this Method merely to clear my own Innocence."

Having thus removed a popular prejudice, he added, "That the true Cauſe of his Sufferings was what their own Religion had taught him, the Belief and Expectation of a future Reſurrection." This Speech gained greatly on their Affections, and they anſwered, That they had received no Advice concerning him, nor had any of the Jews that came from Judea brought any charge againſt him: but at the ſame Time they deſired to know, what he had to ſay in Support of the Religion he had embraced, it being every where decried both by Jew and Gentile. Accordingly, upon a Day appointed, he diſcourſed with them from Morning to Night concerning the Religion and Doctrine of the Holy Jeſus; proving, from the Promiſes and Predictions of the Old Teſtament, that he was the true Meſſiah. But his diſcourſe had different Effects on different Hearers, ſome being convinced, and others perſiſting in their Infidelity: and as they were departing in ſome diſcontent at each other, the Apoſtle told them, it was too plain that God had accompliſhed upon them the prophetical Curſe, of being left to their own wilful hardineſs and Impenitency, to be blind at Noon-day, and to run themſelves headlong into irrecoverable Ruin. That ſince this was the Caſe, they muſt expect, that he would henceforth preach to the Gentiles, who would very readily embrace what they ſo ſcornfully rejected, the glad Tidings of the Goſpel

For two whole Years Paul dwelt at Rome, in a Houſe he had hired for his own Uſe; wherein he conſtantly employed himſelf in Preaching and Writing for the good of the Church. He preached daily without Interruption, and with remarkable Succeſs; ſo that his Impriſonment contributed greatly to the Propagation of the Goſpel, and rendered him famous even in the Emperor's Court, where he converted ſeveral to Chriſtianity.

Among

Among others of the Apoſtle's Converts at Rome was one Oneſimus, who had formerly been a ſervant to Philemon, a Perſon of Diſtinction in Coloſſe, but had run away from his Maſter, and taken with him ſome Things of Value. Having rambled as far as Rome, he was now converted by St. Paul, and by him returned to his Maſter with a ſhort recommendatory Letter, "earneſtly deſiring him to pardon him; and notwithſtanding his former Faults, to treat him kindly, and uſe him as a Brother, promiſing withal, that if he had wronged or owed him any Thing, he himſelf would repay it."

This Epiſtle may be conſidered as a Maſterpiece of Eloquence in the perſuaſive Way; for the Apoſtle has herein had recourſe to all the Conſiderations, which Friendſhip, Religion, Piety, and Tenderneſs can inſpire, to reconcile a Maſter to his Servant; and yet ſome of the Antients were of Opinion, that it did not deſerve a place in the Canon of Scripture, becauſe it was written on a particular Occaſion, and with a Deſign not ſo much to inſtruct Chriſtians in general, as to recommend a poor fugitive Servant. But tho' the Subject of this Epiſtle be a private Affair, yet it contains, among others, the following general Inſtructions: 1. That no Chriſtian, though of the meaneſt Condition, is to be contemned. 2. That Chriſtianity does not impair the Power of Maſters over their Servants. 3. That Servants ought to make Satisfaction for any wrong or Injury done to their Maſters. 4. That Maſters ought to be reconciled to their Servants, upon their Repentance and Acknowledgement of their Faults. And 5. That there is, at all times, a Love and Affection due from a Maſter to a profitable Servant. Who therefore would refuſe to number an Epiſtle, ſo profitable, and ſo inſtructive, with the Reſt of St. Paul's Works!

The Chriſtians of Philippi hearing of St. Paul's Impriſonment at Rome, and not knowing what ſtreights he might be reduced to, raiſed a Contribution for him, and ſent it by Ephroditus their Biſhop, by whom he returned an Epiſtle to them, wherein he gives ſome Account of the ſtate of his Affairs at Rome; gratefully acknowledges their kindneſs to him; warns them againſt the dangerous Opinions which the Judaizing Teachers began to vent among them; and adviſes them to live in continual Obedience to Chriſt; to avoid Diſputations, delight in Prayer, be courageous under Affliction, united in Love and clothed with Humility, in imitation of the bleſſed Jeſus, who ſo far humbled himſelf, as to become obedient unto Death, even the death of the Croſs.

St. Paul had lived three Years at Epheſus, preaching the Goſpel to the numerous Inhabitants of that City, and was therefore well acquainted with the ſtate and condition of the Place; ſo that taking the Opportunity of Tychicus's going thither, he wrote his Epiſtle to the Epheſians, wherein he endeavours to countermine the Principles and Practices both of the Jews and Gentiles; to confirm them in the Belief and

Practice of the Chriſtian Doctrine; and to inſtruct them fully in the great Myſteries of the Goſpel; their Redemption and Juſtification by the Death of Chriſt; their gratuitous Election; their Union with the Jews in one Body, of which Chriſt is the Head and the glorious Exaltation of that Head above all Creatures both Spiritual and Temporal; together with many excellent moral Precepts, both as to the general Duties of Religion, and the Duties of their particular Relations.

St. Paul himſelf had never been at Coloſſe: but Epaphras, who was then at Rome, a Priſoner with him, had preached the Goſpel there with good Succeſs; and from him he might learn, that certain falſe Teachers had endeavoured to perſuade the People, that they ought not to apply to God by Jeſus Chriſt, who ſince his Aſcenſion, was ſo far exalted above them, that Angels were now become the proper Mediators between God and Man; and therefore in Oppoſition to this, as well as other Seductions of the ſame Nature, he wrote his Epiſtle to the Coloſſians; wherein he magnificently diſplays the Meſſiah, and all the Benefits flowing from him, as being the Image of his Father, the Redeemer of all Mankind, the Reconciler of all Things to God, and the Head of the Church, which gives Life and Vigour to all its Members: He commends the Doctrine preached to them by Epaphras, and exhorts them not to be led away by the Reaſonings of human Philoſophy, by the ſuperſtitious Practices of making Differences of Meats and Drinks, or by a pretended Humility in worſhipping Angels; and gives them an Abſtract of many principal Duties of the Chriſtian Life, eſpecially ſuch as reſpect the Relations between Huſbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Maſters and Servants.

By what Means St. Paul was delivered from his Impriſonment, and diſcharged from the Accuſation the Jews brought againſt him, we have no Account in Hiſtory; but it is natural to ſuppoſe, that not having ſufficient Proof of what they alledged, or being informed that the Crimes they accuſed him of, were no Violations of the Roman Law, they durſt not implead him before the Emperor, and ſo permitted him to be diſcharged of Courſe. But by whatever Means he procured his Liberty, he wrote his Epiſtle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his Salutations.

The principal Deſign of it is to magnify Chriſt and the Religion of the Goſpel, above Moſes and the Jewiſh Oeconomy, in order to eſtabliſh and confirm the converted Jews in the firm belief and profeſſion of Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding the Trouble and Perſecutions that would certainly attend them. He therefore repreſents our Saviour in his divine Nature, as far ſuperior to all Angels, and all created Beings: and in his mediatorial Capacity as a greater Prieſt than Aaron, and a greater King and Prieſt than Melchiſedec. He ſhews that the Ceremonies, the Sacrifices, and the Obſervances of the Law could have no Virtue

tue in themſelves, but only as they were the Types of Jeſus Chriſt; and being now accompliſhed in his Perſon, were finally and totally aboliſhed: He inſiſts on the neceſſity of Faith, and, by the Examples of the Patriarchs and Prophets, proves that Juſtification can be procured no other way, than by the Merits of a dying Saviour. And, laſtly, he mingles many excellent precepts for the Regulation of their Lives; Exhortations to put Truſt and Confidence in Chriſt, in all their Sufferings; and ſtrict Cautions againſt Apoſtacy from his Religion in the hotteſt Perſecutions.

Having thus diſcharged his Miniſtry, both by preaching and writing in Italy, St. Paul, accompanied by Timothy, proſecuted his long intended Journey into Spain; and according to the Teſtimony of ſeveral Writers, croſſed the Sea, and preached the Goſpel in Britain.

What Succeſs he had in theſe Weſtern Parts is not known; he however continued there eight or nine Months, and then returned again to the Eaſt, viſited Sicily, Greece, and Crete, and then repaired unto Judea.

But how long he continued in his native Country is unknown, no farther mention being made of him, till his return to Rome, which was probably about the eighth or ninth Year of Nero's Reign. Here he met with Peter, and was together with him thrown into Priſon, doubtleſs in the general Perſecution raiſed againſt the Chriſtians, under Pretence that they had ſet Fire to the City. But beſides this General, there were particular Reaſons for his Impriſonment. Some of the Ancients ſay he was engaged with St. Peter in detecting the Impoſitions of Simon Magus. St. Chryſoſtome tells us that Nero was highly enraged againſt St. Paul, for his having converted one of his favourite concubines; and the Apoſtle after he was thrown into Priſon, perſiſting to perſuade the Lady to continue in her chaſte and pious Reſolutions, Nero commanded him to be put to Death.

How long he remained in Priſon is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was ſcourged before his Execution. He was however allowed the Privilege of a Roman Citizen, and therefore beheaded. As he was led to the place of Execution, he is ſaid to have converted three of the Soldiers ſent to guard and conduct him, and who ſoon after became Martyrs to the Faith. Being come to the place of Execution, which was the Aquæ Salviæ, three Miles from Rome, he chearfully, after a ſolemn Preparation, gave his Neck to the fatal Stroke; and from this vale of Miſery paſſed to the bliſsful Regions of Immortality, to the Kingdom of his beloved Maſter, the great Redeemer of the human Race.

He was buried in the Via Oſtienſis, about two Miles from Rome: and about the Year 317, Conſtantine the Great, at the Inſtance of Pope Sylveſter, built a ſtately Church over his Grave, adorned it with an hundred Marble Columns, and beautified it with the moſt exquiſite Workmanſhip. But this Church being thought too ſmall for the Honour of ſo great an Apoſtle,

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Valentinian, by a Reſcript to Sauſtius, Prefect of the City, cauſed it to be taken down, and a much larger Structure to be erected, which was finiſhed after his Death by Theodoſius; and farther beautified by Placida the Empreſs, at the Perſuaſion of Leo, Biſhop of Rome.

St. Paul, according to Nicephorus, was of a low and ſmall Stature, ſomewhat ſtooping; his Complexion was fair; his Countenance grave; his Head ſmall; his Eyes ſparkling; his Noſe high and bending, and his Hair thick and dark, but mixed with grey. His Conſtitution was weak, and often ſubject to Diſtempers.

But how mean ſoever the Cabinet might be, there was a Treaſure within precious and valuable, as will ſufficiently appear if we view the Accompliſhments of his Mind. His Judgment was clear and ſolid, his Invention quick, and his Memory ſtrong and clear; all which were greatly improved by Art, and the Advantages of a liberal Education. The Schools of Tarſus and Jeruſalem had ſharpened his diſcurſive Faculty, by Logick and the Arts of Reaſoning; inſtructed him in the Inſtitutions of Philoſophy, and adorned his Mind with every Kind of human Learning. A ſufficient Proof, that it is not unlawful to bring the Spoils of Egypt into the Service of the Sanctuary, and to make Uſe of the Advantages of foreign Studies and human Literature, to divine and excellent Purpoſes. He ſeems indeed to have been educated, purpoſely to qualify him for being the Apoſtle of the Gentiles, to contend with and confute the Grave and the Wiſe, the Acute and the Subtle, the Sage and the Learned of the Heathen World, and to wound them with Arrows from their own Quiver. He ſeldom indeed made Uſe of Learning and Philoſophy; it being more agreeable to the Deſigns of the Goſpel, to confound the Wiſdom and Learning of the World, by the plain Doctrine of the Croſs.

Theſe were great Accompliſhments, though only a Shadow of that divine Temper of Mind he enjoyed, and which diſcovered itſelf through the whole Courſe of his Life. He was humble to the loweſt Step of Debaſement and Condeſcenſion, none ever thinking better of others, or more meanly of himſelf. And tho', when he had to deal with envious and malicious Adverſaries, who endeavoured by villifying his Perſon, to obſtruct his Miniſtry, he knew how to magnify his Office, and to let them know that he was not inferior to the chiefeſt of the Apoſtles; yet at other Times he always declared to the World, that he conſidered himſelf as an abortive, or an untimely Birth, as "the leaſt of the Apoſtles, not meet to be called an Apoſtle;" and as if this were not enough, he formed a Word on purpoſe to expreſs his Humility, ſtiling himſelf "Elachiſtoteron, leſs than the leaſt of the Saints; nay, the very chief of Sinners." How freely and frequently does he confeſs, that, before his Converſion, he was a Blaſphemer, a Perſecutor, a Perſon that injured both God and Man? Though honoured with

with the higheſt Grace and Favour, taken up to an immediate converſe with God in Heaven, yet he never ſhewed the leaſt loftineſs over his Brethren; he was intruſted with the greateſt Power and Authority in the Church, but never affected to govern the Faith of Men; he only endeavoured to be an helper of their Joy. How ſtudiouſly did he decline all the Honours and Commendations that were heaped upon him? When ſome in the Church of Corinth magnified him; and, under the patronage of his Name, began to ſet up for a Party, he ſeverely rebuked them, told them that it was Chriſt, not he that was crucified for them; that they "had not been baptized into his Name," nor did he remember to have baptized above three or four of them, and was heartily glad he had no oftener performed the Ceremony, leſt a Foundation might have been laid for that Suſpicion.

His Temperance and Sobriety were remarkable; for he often abridged himſelf of the conveniency of lawful and neceſſary Accommodations; his Hungrings and Thirſtings were frequent; by which Means he reduced the extravagancy of the ſenſual Appetites to a perfect ſubjection of the Law of Reaſon. Hence he eaſily got above the World, with all its Charms and Frowns, and his Mind was continually converſant in Heaven, where his Thoughts were fixed, whither his Deſires always aſcended. What he taught to others he practiſed himſelf; his Converſation was in Heaven, and his Deſires were to depart, and to be with Chriſt. This World neither arreſted his Affection nor diſturbed his Fears: he was neither pleaſed with its Applauſes, nor terrified with its Threatenings: he ſtudied not to pleaſe Men, nor valued the Cenſures they paſſed upon him: he was not greedy of a great Eſtate, Titles of Honour, or rich Preſents from Men; Food and Raiment was his bill of Fare, and more than this he never cared for: accounting, that the leſs he was clogged with theſe Things, the lighter he ſhould march to Heaven, eſpecially as he was travelling through a World over-run with Troubles and Perſecutions. And hence it is very probable, that he always led a ſingle Life, though ſome of the Antients rank him among the married Apoſtles.

His Kindneſs and Charity were remarkable; he had a compaſſionate Tenderneſs for the Poor, and a quick Senſe of the Wants of others. To what Church ſoever he came, it was always one of his firſt Cares to make Proviſion for the Poor, and to ſtir up the Bounty of the rich and wealthy: nay, he himſelf worked often with his own Hands, not only to maintain himſelf, but alſo to help and relieve them. But his Charity to the Souls of Men was infinitely greater, fearing no Dangers, refuſing no Labours, going through good and evil Report, that he might gain Men over to the Knowledge of the Truth, bring them out of the crooked Paths of Vice and Idolatry, and place them in the ſtrait Way that leadeth to Life eternal. Nay, ſo inſatiable was his Thirſt for the good of Souls, that he affirms that he

would

would ſooner himſelf be accurſed from Chriſt, than that his Countrymen ſhould miſcarry. And as he was infinitely ſollicitous to gain them over to the Religion of the Son of God, ſo he was equally careful to keep them from being ſeduced from it; ready to ſuſpect every Thing that might "corrupt their Minds from the Simplicity that is in Chriſt. I am jealous over you," ſays he to the Church of Corinth, with a godly Jealouſy. An Affection of all others the moſt active and vigilant, and which inſpires Men with the moſt paſſionate Care and Concern for the good of thoſe for whom they have the higheſt Degree of Love and Kindneſs. Nor was his Charity to Men greater than his Zeal to God, labouring with all his might to promote the Honour of his Maſter. How remarkably zealous was he while he continued a Member of the Jewiſh Religion, of the Tradition of the Fathers! How earneſt to vindicate and aſſert the Divinity of the Moſaick Diſpenſation, and to perſecute all who were of a contrary Faith, even to Rage and Madneſs! And when his Zeal was afterwards turned into a right Channel, it ran with a ſwift Current, carrying him out againſt all Oppoſition to ruin the Kingdom and the Powers of Darkneſs, to beat down Idolatry, and plant the World with the right Apprehenſions of God, and the true Notions of Religion. When at Athens he ſaw them involved in the groſſeſt Superſtition and Idolatry, and giving the Honour that was due to God alone to Statues and Images, this fired his Zeal, and he could not but let them know the Reſentments of his Mind, and how greatly they diſhonoured God, the great Maker and Preſerver of the World.

This Zeal muſt have rendered him remarkably diligent and induſtrious in the Execution of his Office, warning, reproving, intreating, perſuading, preaching in Seaſon and out of Seaſon, by Night and by Day, by Sea and by Land; he thought no Pains too much to be taken, no Dangers too great to be overcome. For thirty five Years after his Converſion, he ſeldom ſtayed long in one Place, travelling from Jeruſalem thro' Arabia, Aſia, Greece, to Illyricum, to Rome, and to the utmoſt Bounds of the weſtern World, preaching the Goſpel of Chriſt. Running, ſays St. Jerom, from Ocean to Ocean, like the Sun in the Heavens, of which it is ſaid, "his Circuit is from one End of Heaven to the other," ſooner wanting Ground to tread on than a Deſire to propagate the Faith of Chriſt. Nicephorus compares him to a Bird in the Air, which, in a few Years flew round the World: Iſidore to a winged Huſbandman, who flew from Place to Place, to cultivate the World with the moſt exact Rules and Inſtitutions of Life. And while the other Apoſtles confined themſelves, as it were, to one Spot, chuſing this or that particular Province and Place for their Miniſtry, St. Paul over-ran the whole World to its utmoſt Bounds and Corners, planting all Places where he came with the divine Doctrines of the Goſpel. Nor in this Courſe was he tried with the Dangers

Dangers and Difficulties he met with, the Troubles and Oppoſitions that were raiſed againſt him. But all theſe ſerved only to reflect a greater Luſtre on his Patience; of which he was a moſt eminent Pattern, enduring the greateſt Troubles and Perſecutions, with a Patience triumphant and unconquerable. This will eaſily appear if we give ourſelves Time to conſider the Sufferings he underwent; ſome part whereof are thus briefly ſummed up by himſelf: "In Labours abundant, in Stripes above meaſure, in Priſons frequent, in Deaths oft; thrice beaten with Rods. once ſtoned, thrice ſuffered Shipwreck a Night and a Day in the Deep. In Journeyings often, in Perils of Water, in Perils by his Countrymen, in Perils by the Heathen, in Perils in the City, in Perils in the Wilderneſs, in Perils in the Sea, in Perils among falſe Brethren; in Wearineſs and Painfulneſs, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirſt; in Faſtings often, in Cold and Nakedneſs; and beſides thoſe Things that were without, which daily came upon him, the Care of all the Churches." An Accoun , though very great, yet far ſhort of what he endured. All which he gene ouſly underwent with a Soul as cali and ſerene as the Morning Sun; nc Malice or Rage, nor Fury or Storms, could ruffle or diſcompoſe his Spirit: nay, they animated him to riſe up with the greater Eagerneſs and Reſolution to perform his Duty. Could all the Powers of Men and Devils, Spite and Oppoſition, Torments, and Threatnings, have been able to baffle him out of that Religion he had embraced, he muſt have deſerted his Station. But his Soul was ſteeled with a Courage and Reſolution that was impenetrable, and on which no Temptation, either from Hopes or Fears, could make any more impreſſion, than an Arrow ſhot againſt a Wall of Adamant. He did not want Sollicitations both from Jews and Gentiles; and might, doubtleſs, in ſome Meaſure, have made his own Terms, would he have been falſe to his Truſt, and quitted that Way which was then every where ſpoken againſt. But, alas! theſe Things weighed little with our Apoſtle, who "counted not his Life dear unto him, ſo that he might finiſh his Courſe with Joy, and the Miniſtry which he had received of the Lord Jeſus." And therefore, when he thought himſelf under the ſentence of Death, could triumphantly ſay, "I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith." In ſhort, he was a Man in whom the divine Life eminently diſplayed itſelf; he lived piouſly and devoutly, ſoberly and temperately, juſtly and righteouſly; careful "always to keep a Conſcience void of Offence both towards God and Man." This, he tells us, was his Support under all his Sufferings; this the Foundation of his Confidence towards God, and his firm hopes of Happineſs in another World. "This is our Rejoicing, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity we have had our Converſation in the World."

Saint ANDREW.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. Andrew, from his Birth to the Aſcenſion of the Bleſſed Jeſus.

THE ſacred Hiſtorians who have largely deſcribed the Tranſactions of St. Peter and St. Paul, have been ſparing in their Accounts of the other Apoſtles, giving us only now and then a few oblique Strokes and accidental Remarks concerning them. Why no more of their reſpective Actions were recorded by the Penmen of the holy Scriptures is to us unknown. Perhaps the divine Providence thought it convenient that no farther Account ſhould be given of the firſt planting of Chriſtianity in the World, than what concerned Judea and the neighbouring Countries, at leaſt the moſt eminent Places in the Roman Empire, that the Truth of the prophetical Predictions might appear, which had foretold, That " the Law of the Meſſiah ſhould come forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jeruſalem." Beſides a particular Relation of the Acts of ſo many Apoſtles, performed in ſo many Countries muſt have ſwelled the ſacred Volumes to an enormous Bulk, and conſequently rendered them leſs ſerviceable to the ordinary uſe of Chriſtians. St. Andrew was born at Bethſaida, a City of Galilee, built on the Banks of the Lake of Genneſareth, ſon to John or Jonas a Fiſherman of that Town. He was Brother to Simon Peter, but whether elder or younger, is not certainly known, though the generality of the Antients intimate that he was the younger. But, however that be, he was brought up to his Fathers Trade, at which he laboured till our Bleſſed Saviour called him to be a Fiſher of Men, for which he was, by ſome preparatory Inſtitutions qualified even before the Appearance of the Meſſiah.

John the Baptiſt had lately preached the

the Doctrine of Repentance; and was, by the generality of the Jews, from the impartiality of his Precepts, and the remarkable ſtrickneſs and auſterity of his Life, held in great Veneration. He trained up his Proſelytes under the Diſcipline of Repentance, and, by urging on them a ſevere change and reformation of Life, prepared them to entertain the Doctrine of the Meſſiah, whoſe approach he told them was now near at Hand; repreſenting to them the greatneſs of his Perſon, and the importance of the Deſign on which he came into the World. Beſides the Multitudes that flocked to the Baptiſt's Diſcourſes, he, according to the Cuſtom of the Jewiſh Maſters, had ſome peculiar and ſelect Diſciples, who more conſtantly attended on his Lectures, and generally waited upon his Perſon.

In the Number of theſe Followers was our Apoſtle; and was with him beyond Jordan, when the Meſſiah, who had ſome Time before been baptized, came that Way. Upon his approach, the Baptiſt pointed him out as the Meſſiah, ſtiling him the Lamb of God, the true Sacrifice, that was to expiate the Sins of the World. As ſoon as the Baptiſt had given this Character of Jeſus, Andrew, and another Diſciple, probably St. John, followed the Saviour of Mankind to the Place of his abode.

After ſome Converſation with him Andrew departed, and having found his Brother Simon, informed him that he had diſcovered the great Meſſiah ſo long expected by the Houſe of Jacob; and accordingly brought him to Jeſus. They did not, however, ſtay long with their Maſter, but returned to their Calling.

Something more than a Year after Jeſus paſſing through Galilee, found Andrew and Peter fiſhing on the Sea of Galilee, where he fully ſatisfied them of the greatneſs and divinity of his Perſon, by a miraculous Draught of Fiſhes, which they took at his Command. He now told them that they ſhould enter on a different ſeries of Labours, and inſtead of Fiſh, they ſhould by the efficacy and influence of their Doctrine, catch Men; commanding them to follow him, as his immediate Diſciples and Attendants; and they accordingly left all and followed him.

Shortly after, Andrew, together with the reſt, was called to the Office and Honour of the Apoſtulate, and made choice of to be one of Chriſt's immediate Vicegerents for planting and propagating the Chriſtian Church.

CHAP. II.

The Tranſactions of St. Andrew, from our Bleſſed Saviour's Aſcenſion, till his Martyrdom.

AFTER the Aſcenſion of the Bleſſed Jeſus into Heaven, and the Holy Ghoſt had deſcended in a viſible Manner on the Apoſtles, to qualify them for their great Undertaking, that of rooting out Profaneneſs and Idolatry, and ſubduing the World to the Doctrine of the Goſpel, St. Andrew, according to the generality of Antient Writers, was choſen to preach the Goſpel in Scythia, and the neighbouring Countries.

Accordingly, he departed from Jeruſalem, and firſt travelled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, inſtructing the Inhabitants in the Faith of Chriſt, and continued his Journey along the Euxine Sea, into the Solitudes of Scythia. An ancient Author has given us a more circumſtantial Detail of the Travels of St. Andrew, but it is uncertain from whence he drew his Information. He tells us, that he firſt came to Amynſus, where being entertained by a Jew, he went into the Synagogue, preached to them concerning Jeſus, and from the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, proved him to be the Meſſiah, and the Saviour of the World. Having converted many here, he ſettled the Times of their public Meetings, and ordained them Prieſts. He went next to Trapezius, a maritime City on the Euxine Sea; from whence, after viſiting many other Places, he came to Nice, where he ſtaid two Years, preaching and working Miracles with great Succeſs. After leaving Nice, he paſſed to Nicomedia, and from thence to Chalcedon, whence he ſailed through the Propontis, came by the Euxine Sea to Heraclea, and afterwards to Amatris. In all theſe Places he met with the greateſt Difficulties, but overcame them by an invincible Patience and Reſolution.

He next came to Sinope, a City ſituated on the ſame Sea, and famous both for the birth and burial of King Mithridates: here he met with his Brother Peter, and ſtaid with him a conſiderable Time at this Place. The Inhabitants of Sinope were moſtly Jews, who, partly from a Zeal for their Religion, and partly from their barbarous Manners, were exaſperated againſt St. Andrew, and entered into a Confederacy to burn the Houſe in which he lodged. But being diſappointed in their Deſign, they treated him with the moſt ſavage Cruelty, throwing him on the Ground, ſtamping upon him with their Feet, pulling and dragging him from Place to Place; ſome beating him with Clubs, ſome pelting him with Stones, and others, to ſatisfy

fy their brutal Revenge, biting off his Fleſh with their Teeth; till apprehending they had entirely deprived him of Life, they caſt him out into the Fields. But he miraculouſly recovered, and returned publickly into the City; by which, and other Miracles he wrought among them, he converted many from the error of their Ways, and induced them to become Diſciples of the Bleſſed Jeſus.

Departing from Sinope, he returned to Amynſus, paſſed from thence through Trapezius and Neocæſarea to Samoſata, where he ſilenced the acuteſt and wiſeſt Philoſophers of that Country; and, after ſpending ſome Time there in preaching the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, he returned to Jeruſalem. But he did not continue long in his native Country, returning again to the Province allotted him for the exerciſe of his Miniſtry, travelling firſt into the Country of the Abaſgi, and had great Succeſs in preaching the Goſpel to the Inhabitants of the City of Sebaſtoble, ſituated on the eaſtern Shore of the Euxine Sea, between the Rivers Phaſis and Apſarus. From thence he removed into the Country of the Zecchi, and the Boſphorani; but finding the People remarkably barbarous, and intractable, he did not ſtay long among them, except at Cherſon, a large and populous City within the Boſphorus, where he had great Succeſs in his Miniſtry; and therefore continued ſome Time with the new Converts to inſtruct and confirm them in the Faith. From this City he paſſed by Sea to Sinope, the royal Seat of Mithridates, to encourage and confirm the Churches he had planted in thoſe Parts; and here he ordained Philogos, formerly one of St. Paul's Diſciples, Biſhop of that City.

After leaving Sinope he came to Byzantium, ſince called Conſtantinople, where he inſtructed the Inhabitants in the Chriſtian Religion, founded a Church for divine worſhip, and ordained Stachys, firſt Biſhop of that Place. But being baniſhed from the City, he fled to Argyropolis, where he preached the Goſpel for two Years together with remarkable Succeſs, converting great Numbers to the Chriſtian Faith.

He next travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Theſſaly, Acaia, and Epirus, preaching the Goſpel, propagating Chriſtianity, and confirming the Doctrine he taught with Signs and Miracles. At laſt he came to Patrea, a City of Achaia, where he gave his laſt and greateſt Teſtimony to the Goſpel of his divine Maſter, I mean, he ſealed it with his Blood, and received the Crown of Martyrdom in the following Manner.

Ægeas, Proconſul of Achaia, came at this Time to Patrea, where, obſerving that Multitudes had abandoned the Heathen Religion and embraced Chriſtianity, he had recourſe to every Method both of Favour and Cruelty, to reduce the People to their old Idolatry. The Apoſtle, whom no Difficulties or Dangers could deter from performing the Duties of his Miniſtry, addreſſed himſelf to the Proconſul, calmly put him in Mind that being only a Judge of Men, he ought to revere him who

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was the ſupreme and impartial Judge of all, pay him the divine Honours due to his exalted Majeſty, and abandon the Impieties of his idolatrous Worſhip. The Proconſul, inſtead of aſſenting to theſe Arguments of the Apoſtle, ridiculed him as an Innovator in Religion, and a Propagator of that Superſtition, whoſe Author the Jews had put to the infamous Death of the Croſs. On his mentioning the Croſs, our Apoſtle took the Opportunity of repreſenting to him the infinite Love and Kindneſs of our great Redeemer, who came down from Heaven to purchaſe the Salvation of Mankind; and to obtain it did not diſdain to die upon the Croſs. The Proconſul anſwered, that he might hope to perſuade the credulous Multitude of the Truth of what he ſaid: but for his Part he would not liſten to ſuch a legendary Tale; and if he did not comply with him, in doing Sacrifice to the Gods, he would cauſe him to ſuffer upon that Croſs he had ſo highly magnified. St. Andrew replied, that he ſacrificed every Day to God, the only true and omnipotent Being, not with Fumes and bloody Offerings, but in the Sacrifice of the immaculate Lamb of God. This Anſwer provoked the Proconſul; and he committed the Apoſtle to Priſon; which ſo exaſperated the People, that a Mutiny would have enſued, had not St. Andrew reſtrained them, perſuading them to imitate the Mildneſs and Patience of the meek and humble Jeſus, and not hinder him from receiving the Crown of Martyrdom, which now waited for him.

The next Day he was again brought before the Proconſul, who perſuaded him not fooliſhly to throw away his Life, but preſerve it, and enjoy the Pleaſures of the World. The Apoſtle told him, that if he would renounce his Idolatries, and heartily embrace the Chriſtian Faith, he ſhould, with him and the Members who had believed in the Son of God, receive eternal Happineſs in the Meſſiah's Kingdom. The Proconſul anſwered, that he himſelf ſhould never embrace the Religion he mentioned; and that the only Reaſon why he was ſo earneſt with him to ſacrifice to the Gods was, that thoſe whom he had every where ſeduced, might, by his Example, be brought back to the ancient Religion they had forſaken. To which the Apoſtle replied, that he ſaw it was in vain to endeavour to perſuade a Perſon incapable of ſober Counſels, and hardened in his own Blindneſs and Folly; that with regard to himſelf, he might act as he pleaſed, and if he had any Torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him; as the greater Conſtancy he ſhewed in his Sufferings for Chriſt, the more acceptable he ſhould be to his Lord and Maſter. Ægeas could hold no longer, but paſſed ſentence of Death upon him.

He firſt ordered him to be ſcourged, ſeven Lictors ſucceſſively whipping his naked Body; and ſeeing his invincible Patience and Conſtancy, commanded him to be crucified; but to be faſtened to the Croſs with Cords inſtead of Nails, that his Death might be more lingering and tedious. As he

he was led to the Place of Execution, walking with a chearful and compoſed Mind, the People cried out, that a good and innocent Man was unjuſtly condemned to die. On his coming near the Croſs, he ſaluted it in the following Manner: "I have long deſired and expected this happy Hour. The Croſs has been conſecrated by the Body of Chriſt hanging on it, and adorned with his Members as with ſo many ineſtimable Jewels. I therefore come joyfully and triumphing to it, that it may receive me as a Diſciple and Follower of him who once hung upon it, and be the Means of carrying me ſafe to my Maſter, being the Inſtrument on which he redeemed me."

After offering up his Prayers to the Throne of Grace, and exhorting the People to Conſtancy and Perſeverance in the Religion he had delivered to them, he was faſtened to the Croſs, on which he hung two whole Days, teaching and inſtructing the People. In the mean Time great Intereſt was made to the Proconſul to ſpare his Life; but the Apoſtle earneſtly begged of the Almighty, that he might now depart, and ſeal the Truth of his Religion with his Blood. His Prayers were heard, and he immediately expired on the laſt of November, but in what Year is uncertain.

There ſeems to have been ſomething peculiar in the Croſs on which he ſuffered; and is commonly thought to have been a Croſs decuſſate, or two Pieces of Timber croſſing each other in the Center, in the Form of the Letter X, hence uſually known by the Name of St. Andrew's Croſs; though ſome affirm that he was crucified on an Olive-tree.

His Body being taken from the Croſs, was decently and honourably interred by Maximilla, a Lady of great Quality and Eſtate, and whom Nicephorus tells us was Wife to the Proconſul. Conſtantine the Great afterwards removed his Body to Conſtantinople, and buried it in the great Church he had built to the Honour of the Apoſtles: but this Structure being taken down ſome hundred of Years after, in order to rebuild it, by Juſtinian the Emperor, the Body of St. Andrew was found in a wooden Coffin, and again depoſited in its proper Place.

Heſychus, Preſbyter of Jeruſalem, hath given the following encomiaſtic Character of St. Andrew, with which I ſhall conclude this Account of his Life. "St. Andrew was the firſt born of the Apoſtolic Choir, the principal and firſt Pillar of the Church, a Rock before the Rock, the Foundation of that Foundation, the firſt Fruits of the Beginning, a Caller before he was called himſelf; he preached that Goſpel which was not yet revealed or entertained; he revealed and made known that Life to his Brother, which he had not yet perfectly learned himſelf. So great Treaſures did that one Queſtion bring him, "Maſter, where dwelleſt thou?" which he ſoon perceived by the Anſwer, "Come and ſee." How art thou become a Prophet? whence thus divinely ſkilful? what is it that thou foundeſt in Peter's Ears, "We have found him of whom Moſes and the Prophets did write?"

write?" &c. Why doſt thou attempt to compaſs him, whom thou canſt not comprehend? how can he be found who his Omnipreſent? But he well knew what he ſaid, we have found him whom Adam loſt, whom Eve injured, whom the Clouds of Sin have hidden from us, and to whom our Tranſgreſſions had hitherto rendered us Srangers. Thus had St. Andrew the Honour of being the firſt Apoſtle that preached the Goſpel of the Son of God."

Saint

Saint JAMES, the Great.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. James the Great, from his Birth to the Aſcenſion of the Son of God.

St. James, called the Great, to diſtinguiſh him from another Apoſtle, was a Native of Galilee, born in all Probability either at Capernaum or Bethſaida, as he was a Partner with Simon Peter in the fiſhing Trade. He was the Son of Zebedee, a Fiſherman, who kept ſeveral Servants to carry on his Trade, and therefore muſt have been a Perſon of ſome Conſequence in his Way. His Mother's Name was Mary, ſirnamed Salome, the Daughter of Cleopas, and Siſter or rather Couſin-german to Mary the Mother of our Lord; ſo that he had the Honour of being a near Relation to Chriſt himſelf.

He was brought up to the Trade of his Father; a mean Occupation, indeed, in the Eye of the World, but no Employment is mean that is honeſt and induſtrious; and it ſhould be remembered, that the Son of God himſelf ſtooped ſo low, as to become the reputed Son of a Carpenter, and during the Retirement of his private Life, laboured himſelf at his Father's Trade; not merely devoting himſelf to Contemplations, nor withdrawing from all uſeful Society with the World, and hiding himſelf in the Solitudes of an Anchoret, but buſying himſelf in an active Courſe of Life.

St. James was not diſcouraged at the meanneſs of his Father's Trade; but applied himſelf to it with remarkable Aſſiduity, and was exerciſing his Employment, when the Saviour of the World paſſing by the Sea of Galilee, ſaw him with his Brother in the Ship, and called them both to be his Diſciples. Nor was the Call in vain; they chearfully complied with it, and immediately left all to follow him.

They did not ſtay to diſpute his Commands, or ſolicitouſly enquire into the minute Conſequences of the Undertaking, the Troubles and Dangers that might attend this new Employment; but readily delivered themſelves up, to perform whatever Service he ſhould appoint them.

Soon after this, he was called, from the Station of an ordinary Diſciple, to the apoſtolical Office, and even honoured with ſome particular Favours, beyond moſt of the Apoſtles, being one of the three whom our Lord made Choice of, as his Companions in the more intimate Tranſactions of his Life, from which the reſt were excluded. Thus, with Peter and his Brother John, he attended his Maſter when he raiſed the Daughter of Jairus from the Dead; he was admitted to Chriſt's glorious Transfiguration on the Mount, and heard the Diſcourſes that paſſed between him and the great Miniſters from the Courts of Heaven: And when the holy Jeſus was to undergo his bitter Agonies in the Garden, as preparatory Sufferings to his Paſſion, James was one of the three taken to be a Spectator of them. It is not eaſy to determine, what Reaſons induced the Redeemer of Mankind, to admit thoſe three Apoſtles to peculiar Acts of Favour; though he doubtleſs did it for wiſe and proper Ends; whether he deſigned theſe three to be more ſolemn and peculiar Witneſſes, of ſome remarkable Tranſactions of his Life than the other Apoſtles, or that they would be more eminently uſeful and ſerviceable in ſome Parts of the apoſtolic Office, or to encourage them thereby to prepare for the Sufferings that would attend them in the Miniſtry, deſigning them for ſome more eminent Kinds of Martyrdom than the reſt.

Nor was it the leaſt Inſtance of that particular Honour our Lord conferred on theſe Apoſtles, that at his calling them to the Apoſtolate, he gave them a new Name and Title. A Thing not uncommon of old, for the Almighty often impoſed new Names on Perſons, when he intended them for ſome great and peculiar Services and Employments; Inſtances of this we have in Abraham and Jacob. Accordingly our Lord, at the Election of theſe three Apoſtles, gave them new Names. Simon he called Peter, or a Rock, and James and John, Boanerges, or the Sons of Thunder. What our Lord intended by their Sirname, is much eaſier to conjecture than determine; ſome think it was given them on Account of their being preſent in the Mount, when a Voice came out of the Cloud, ſaying, "This is my beloved Son," &c. for when the People heard the ſame Voice at another Time, they ſaid "it thundered." But this Obſervation is in itſelf very inconſiderable, becauſe it was equally applicable to Peter as to them. Others think that it was given them, on Account of their loud and bold preaching the Goſpel to the World, fearing no Threatnings, deſpiſing all Oppoſition, and going on Thundring in the Ears of a drowſy and ſleepy World; rouſing and awakening the Conſcien-

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ces of Men, with the Earneſtneſs and Vehemence of their Preaching, which reſembled Thunder, as the Voice of God powerfully ſhakes the natural World, and breaks in Pieces the Cedars of Lebanon. Others think it relates to the Doctrines they delivered, teaching the great Myſteries and Speculations of the Goſpel, in a profounder and more loftier Strain than the reſt. How far this might be true with Regard to St. James, the Scripture is wholly ſilent, but it was certainly verified in his Brother John, whoſe Goſpel is ſo full of the more ſublime Notions and Myſteries of the Goſpel, concerning the Divinity, the Pre-exiſtence, &c. of Chriſt, that he is generally affirmed by the Ancients to thunder rather than ſpeak. Perhaps the Expreſſion may denote no more, than that in general they were to be prime and eminent Miniſters, in this new State of Things; the introducing the Goſpel or Evangelical Diſpenſation, being called " a Voice ſhaking the Heavens and the Earth," and therefore exactly correſpondent to the native Importance of the Word, ſignifying an Earthquake, or a vehement Commotion, that makes a Noiſe like Thunder.

But however this be, our bleſſed Saviour doubtleſs alluded by this Term to the furious and reſolute Diſpoſition of theſe two Brothers, who ſeem to have been of a more fiery Temper than the reſt of the Apoſtles, of which we have this memorable Inſtance. When our Lord was determined on his Journey to Jeruſalem, he ſent ſome of his Diſciples before him to make Preparations for his coming; but, on their entering a Village of Samaria, were rudely rejected from the old Grudge that ſubſiſted between the Samaritans and Jews, and becauſe our Saviour, by going up to Jeruſalem, ſeemed to ſlight their Place of Worſhip on Mount Gerizim. This Piece of Rudeneſs and Inhumanity was ſo highly reſented by St. James and his Brother, that they came to Jeſus; deſiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling down Fire from Heaven to conſume this barbarous inhoſpitable People. So apt are Men for every trifling Provocation to call upon Heaven to revenge them on the Aggreſſors according to the extravagancies of their own unreaſonable Paſſions! But the holy Jeſus ſoon convinced them of their Miſtake, by telling them that inſtead of deſtroying, he was come to ſave the Lives of the Children of Men.

CHAP. II.

The Tranſactions of St. James, from the Meſſiah's Aſcenſion to his ſealing the Truth of the Goſpel with his Blood.

WHAT became of St. James after the Aſcenſion of his great and beloved Maſter, we have no Account in ſacred Hiſtory. Sophronius tells that he preached to the diſperſed Jews, that is, to thoſe Converts who were diſperſed after the Death of Stephen. The Spaniſh Writers will have it that after preaching the Goſpel in ſeveral Parts of Judea and Samaria, he viſited Spain, where he planted Chriſtianity, and appointed ſome ſelect Diſciples to perfect what he had begun; but if we conſider the ſhortneſs of St. James's Life, and that the Apoſtles continued in a Body at Jeruſalem, even after the Diſperſion of the other Chriſtians, we ſhall find it difficult to allow Time ſufficient for ſo tedious and difficult a Voyage as that was in thoſe early Ages; and therefore it is ſafeſt to confine his Miniſtry to Judea and the adjacent Countries.

Herod Agrippa, Son of Ariſtobulus and Grandſon of Herod the Great, had been a great Favourite both with the Emperor Caligula, and his Succeſſor Claudius, who conferred on him his Grandfather's Kingdoms, and ſent him into Judea. Herod was noble and generous, prudent and politic, thoroughly verſed in all the Arts and Intrigues of a Court; he knew how to oblige his Enemies, and molify or avert the Diſpleaſure of the Emperor. He was of a courteous and affable Diſpoſition; but at the ſame Time a great Zealot of the Jewiſh Religion, and a very accurate Obſerver of the Moſaic Law. This Prince at his arrival in his new Kingdom, thought there was no ſurer Way of ingratiating himſelf into the Favour of the Populace, than by perſecuting the Chriſtians, whom he knew the Jews deteſted. Accordingly he began a violent Perſecution; but the Commonality being too mean a Sacrifice to ſatisfy his own Zeal, and favour his popular Deſigns, he laid Hands on St. James, whoſe active Temper and vigorous Manner of contending for the truth and excellency of the Chriſtian Religion rendered him a proper Victim on this Occaſion.

The Zeal which animated Herod to lay Hands on St. James alſo animated him to paſs Sentence of Death on him immediately. As he was led to the Place of Execution, the Officer that guarded him to the Tribunal, or rather his Accuſer, having been converted by that remarkable Courage and Conſtancy ſhewn by the Apoſtle at the Time of his Trial, repented of what he had done, came and fell down at the Apoſtle's Feet, and heartily begged Pardon for what he had ſaid againſt him. The holy Man, after recovering from

from the Surprize, tenderly embraced him. "Peace, ſaid he, my Son, peace be to thee and the Pardon of thy Faults." Upon which the Officer publickly declared himſelf a Chriſtian, and both were beheaded at the ſame Time. Thus fell the great Apoſtle St. James, the firſt Proto-martyr, the firſt of that Number that gained the Crown, taking chearfully that Cup of which he had long ſince told his Lord he was ready to drink of.

But the divine Vengeance, that never ſleeps, would not ſuffer the Death of this innocent and righteous Man to paſs long unrevenged; for ſhortly after the Martyrdom of St. James, Herod removed to Cæſarea, in order to make War on the neighbouring Tyrians and Sidonians; and while he continued in this City, he proclaimed ſolemn Fights and feſtival Entertainments to be held in Honour of Cæſar, to which there flocked a prodigious Confluence of the principal Inhabitants of the adjacent Parts. Early in the Morning of the ſecond Day he came with great State into the Theatre, to make an Oration to the People; and being cloathed in a Robe curiouſly wrought with Silver, the Beams of the Sun were reflected from it with ſuch Luſtre, that the People cried out, that it was ſome Deity they beheld; and that he who ſpake to them muſt be ſomething above the common Standard of Humanity. This impious Applauſe Herod received without the leaſt Token of Diſlike, or Senſe of the Injury that was done by it to the ſupreme Being. But a ſudden Accident changed the Scene, and turned their Mirth and rejoicing into Melancholy and Mourning. For Herod looking up he ſaw an Owl perched upon a Rope over his Head, which he conſidered as the fatal Miniſter of his Death. On which an incurable Melancholy ſeized his Mind, and the moſt exquiſite Torments his Bowels, occaſioned by thoſe Worms St. Luke mentions; ſo that turning to the People, he cried out: "Behold the Deity you admired, and yourſelves evidently convinced of Flattery and Falſehood: ſee me this Moment condemned by the Laws of Fate to die, whom juſt now you ſtiled Immortal." He was removed into the Palace, but his Pains ſtill increaſed upon him; and though the People faſted and offered up Prayers for his Life and Health, yet his acute Torments prevailed, and after five Days put a Period to his Life.

Saint

Saint JOHN the Evangeliſt.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. John, from his Birth to the Aſcenſion of his great Lord and Maſter.

St. John was a Native of Galilee, the Son of Zebedee and Salome, one of thoſe devout Women that conſtantly attended on our Lord in his Miniſtry, and Brother of James the Great.

Before his becoming a Diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus, he was in all Probability a Follower of John the Baptiſt, and is thought to be that other Diſciple, who, in the firſt Chapter of his Goſpel, is ſaid to have been preſent with Andrew when John declared Jeſus to be "the Lamb of God," and thereupon to have followed him to the Place of his Abode.

He was by much the Youngeſt of the Apoſtles, yet he was admitted into as great a Share of his Maſter's Confidence as any of them. He was one of thoſe to whom he communicated the moſt private Meſſages of his Life; one of thoſe whom he took with him when he raiſed the Daughter of Jairus from the Dead; one of thoſe to whom he exhibited a Specimen of his Divinity, in his Transfiguration on the Mount; one of thoſe who were preſent at his Conference with Moſes and Elias, and heard that Voice which declared him "the beloved Son of God;" and one of thoſe who were Companions in his Solitude, moſt retired Devotions, and bitter Agonies in the Garden. Thus of the three, who were made the Witneſſes of their Maſter's Actions, which it was convenient to conceal, St. John conſtantly enjoyed the Priviledge of being one. Nay, even of theſe three, he ſeems to have had, in ſome Reſpects, the Preference, Witneſs his lying on his Maſter's Boſom at the Paſchal Supper; and even when Peter was deſirous of knowing who was the Perſon that ſhould betray their Maſter, and durſt not himſelf aſk the Queſtion, he made

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uſe of St. John to propoſe it to their Lord.

Theſe Inſtances of particular Favour our Apoſtle endeavoured in ſome Meaſure to anſwer by returns of particular Kindneſs and Conſtancy. For though he at firſt deſerted his Maſter on his Apprehenſion, yet he ſoon recovered himſelf, and came back to ſeek his Saviour, confidently entered the High-prieſt's Hall, followed our Lord through the ſeveral Particulars of his Trial, and at laſt waited on him at his Execution, owning him, as well as being owned by him, in the midſt of armed Soldiers, and in the thickeſt Crowds of his moſt inveterate Enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his Care his ſorrowful and diſconſolate Mother, with his dying Breath. And certainly the holy Jeſus could not have given a more honourable Teſtimony of his particular Reſpect and Kindneſs to St. John, than by leaving his own Mother to his Truſt and Care, and ſubſtituting him to ſupply that Duty he himſelf paid her, while he reſided in this Vale of Sorrow.

At the firſt News of our Lord's being riſen from the Chambers of the Duſt, he, in Company with Peter, haſtened to the Sepulchre. There ſeems indeed to have been a peculiar Intimacy between theſe two Diſciples. It was Peter that St. John introduced into the Palace of the High-prieſt; it was Peter to whom he gave Notice of Chriſt's appearing when he came to them at the Sea of Tiberias, in the Habit of a Stranger; and it was for St. John that Peter was ſo ſolicitouſly inquiſitive to know what was determined concerning him.

C H A P. II.

The Tranſactions of St. John, from the Aſcenſion of Chriſt to his Death.

AFTER the aſcenſion of the Saviour of the World, when the Apoſtle made a Diviſion of the province among themſelves, that of Aſia fell to the ſhare of St. John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jeruſalem till the Death of the bleſſed Virgin, which happened about fifteen Years after our Lord's Aſcenſion, Being releaſed from the truſt committed to his Care by his Dying Maſter, he retired into Aſia, and induſtriouſly applied himſelf to the propagation of Chriſtianity, preaching where the Goſpel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many Churches of Note and Eminence were of his Foundation, particularly thoſe of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira,

Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodocea, and others; but his chief Place of Reſidence was at Epheſus, where St. Paul had many Years before founded a Church, and conſtituted Timothy Biſhop of it. Nor can we ſuppoſe that he confined his Miniſtry entirely to Aſia Minor; it is highly reaſonable to think that he preached in other Parts of the Eaſt; probably to the Parthians, his firſt Epiſtle being anciently directed to them; and the Jeſuits aſſure us, that the Inhabitants of the Kingdom of Baſſora in India affirm, that, according to a Tradition handed down from their Anceſtors, St. John planted the Chriſtian Faith in their Country.

After ſpending ſeveral Years at Epheſus, he was accuſed to Domitian, who had begun a Perſecution againſt the Chriſtians, as an eminent Aſſertor of Atheiſm and Impiety, and a public Subverter of the Religion of the Empire; ſo that by his Command, the Proconſul ſent him bound to Rome, where he met with the Treatment that might have been expected from ſo barbarous a Prince, being thrown into a Cauldron of boiling Oil. But the Almighty, who reſerved him for farther Services in the Vineyard of his Son, reſtrained the Heat, as he did in the fiery Furnace of old, and delivered him from this ſeemingly unavoidable Deſtruction. And ſurely one would have thought that ſo miraculous a Deliverance ſhould have been ſufficient to have perſuaded any rational Man that the Religion he taught was from God, and that he was protected from Danger by the Hand of Omnipotence. But Miracles themſelves were not ſufficient to convince this cruel Emperor, or abate his Fury. He ordered St. John to be tranſported to a diſconſolate Iſland in the Archipelago called Patmos, where he continued ſeveral Years inſtructing the poor Inhabitants in the Knowledge of the Chriſtian Faith; and here, about the End of Domitian's Reign, he wrote his Book of Revelations, exhibiting by Viſions and prophetical Repreſentations, the State and Condition of Chriſtianity in the future Periods and Ages of the Church.

Upon the Death of Domitian, and the Succeſſion of Nerva, who repealed all the odious Acts of his Predeceſſor, and by public Edicts recalled thoſe whom the Fury of Domitian had baniſhed, St. John returned to Aſia, and fixed his Seat again at Epheſus; the rather becauſe the People of that City had lately martyred Timothy their Biſhop. Here, with the Aſſiſtance of ſeven other Biſhops, he took upon himſelf the Government of the large Dioceſe of Aſia Minor, erected Oratories, and diſpoſed of the Clergy in the beſt Manner that the Circumſtances of thoſe Times would permit, ſpending his Time in an indefatigable Execution of his Charge, travelling from Eaſt to Weſt to inſtruct the World in the Principles of the holy Religion he was ſent to propagate. In this Manner St John continued to labour in the Vineyard of his great Maſter, till Death put a Period to all his Toils and Sufferings; which happened in the beginning

ning of Trajan's Reign, in the Ninety-eighth Year of his Age, and he was, according to Euſebius, buried near Epheſus.

St. John ſeems always to have led a ſingle Life; tho' ſome of the Ancients tell us he was a married Man. With regard to his natural Temper, he ſeems to have been of an eager and reſolute Diſpoſition, eaſily inflamed, but which Age had reduced to a calmer Temper. He was poliſhed by no Study or Arts of Learning; but what was wanting from human Art was abundantly ſupplied by the excellent Conſtitution of his Mind, and that fullneſs of divine Grace with which he was adorned. His Humility was admirable, ſtudiouſly concealing his own Honour. For in his Epiſtles he never ſtiles himſelf either Apoſtle or Evangeliſt; the Title of Preſbyter, or Elder, is all he aſſumes, and probably in regard to his Age as much as his Office. In his Goſpel, when he ſpeaks of the Diſciple whom Jeſus loved, he conſtantly conceals his own Name, leaving the Reader to diſcover whom he meant. Love and Charity he practiſed himſelf, and affectionately preſſed them upon others: the great love of his Saviour towards him ſeems to have inſpired his Soul with a larger and more generous Charity than the reſt. This is the great Vein that runs thro' all his Writings, eſpecially his Epiſtles, where he urges it as the great and peculiar Law of Chriſtianity, and without which all other Pretences to the Religion of the Holy Jeſus are vain and frivolous, uſeleſs and inſignificant. And this was his conſtant practice to the very Hour of his Diſſolution; for when Age and the decays of Nature had rendered him ſo weak that he was unable to preach to the People any longer, he was conſtantly led, at every publick Meeting, to the Church at Epheſus, and always repeated to them the ſame Precept, "Little Children, love one another." And when his Hearers, wearied with the conſtant Repetition of the ſame Thing, aſked him why he never varied his Diſcourſe, he anſwered, Becauſe to love one another was the Command of our Bleſſed Saviour, and if they did nothing more, this alone was ſufficient.

But the largeſt Meaſures of his Charity were diſplayed in the remarkable Care he took to preſerve the Souls of Men; travelling from Eaſt to Weſt in propagating the Principles of that Religion he was ſent to teach, patiently enduring every Torment, ſurmounting every Difficulty, and removing every Obſtacle, to ſave the Souls of the human Race, free their Minds from error and Idolatry, and turn them from the Paths of Vice and Debauchery. Among many other Inſtances of this Kind, the following is related by Euſebius.

During one of his Viſitations of the Church at Epheſus, he was greatly pleaſed with the Appearance and Behaviour of a young Man, whom he called to him, and, with a ſpecial Charge, recommended to the Biſhop, who undertook the Truſt, and promiſed to diſcharge it with the greateſt Fidelity. Accordingly, the Biſhop took him home with him to his Houſe,

carefully inſtructed him in the Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, and at laſt baptized and confirmed him. After he had proceeded thus far, he thought he might a little relax the Reins of Diſciple; but the Youth made a bad Uſe of his Liberty, and being debauched by evil Company, became the Captain of a Gang of Robbers, and committed the moſt horrid Outrages, in the adjacent Countries. St. John, being informed of this at his Return, ſharply reproved the Biſhop, and determined to find him out; never conſidering the Dangers that would inevitably attend him by venturing himſelf among Perſons of deſperate Fortunes. Accordingly, he repaired to the Mountains where they uſually abode, and being taken by one of the Robbers placed as a Watch, he deſired to be carried to their Captain, who, on ſeeing St. John coming towards him, immediately fled. The Apoſtle, forgetting his Age, haſted after him; but being unable to overtake him, he paſſionately cried out, "Child, why doſt thou run from thy Father, an old and defenceleſs Man? Spare me the pains of following you, and let not Terror and Deſpair ſeize upon you. Your Salvation is not irrecoverable. Stay and be convinced that Chriſt himſelf hath ſent me." At theſe Words the young Man ſtopped, fixed his Eyes upon the Earth, trembling in every Part, and burſt into a flood of Tears. And when the aged Apoſtle approached, he embraced him, and implored Forgiveneſs with ſuch Weeping and Lamentations, that he ſeemed to be re-baptized, and to waſh away his Sins with his own Tears. The Apoſtle received him with the greateſt Kindneſs, aſſured him that he had obtained Pardon for his Sins at the Hands of his great Redeemer, and returned him a Penitent and Convert to the Church.

Another Inſtance of our Apoſtle's Care for the Souls of Men is the Writings he left to Poſterity. The firſt of which in Time, tho' laſt in the ſacred Canon, is his Apocalypſe, or Book of Revelations, which he wrote during his Baniſhment at Patmos. After the Preface and Admonition given to the Biſhops of the ſeven Churches in Aſia, it contains a prophetic View of the Proſecutions the Faithful were to ſuffer from the Jews, Hereticks, tyrannical Princes, together with the peaceable and flouriſhing State of the Church, till diſturbed by other Enemies; and the Happineſs of the Church triumphant in Heaven. And hence St. John is, in the ſtricteſt Senſe, a Prophet, and has thereby one material Addition to his Titles, being not only an Apoſtle and Evangeliſt, but alſo a Prophet: an Honour peculiar to himſelf. St. Peter was an Apoſtle, but no Evangeliſt: St. Mark and St. Luke were Evangeliſts, but no Apoſtles: St. Matthew was an Apoſtle and Evangeliſt, but no Prophet: but St. John was an Apoſtle, an Evangeliſt, and a Prophet.

Next to the Apocalypſe, in Order of Time, are his three Epiſtles; the firſt of which is Catholic, calculated for all Times and Places, containing the moſt excellent Rules for the conduct of

of a Chriſtian Life, preſſing to holineſs and pureneſs of Manners, and not to be ſatisfied with a naked and empty Profeſſion of Religion, not to be led away with the crafty Inſinuations of Seducers, and cautioning Men againſt the poiſonous Principles and Practices of the Gnoſtics. The Apoſtle here, according to his uſual Modeſty, conceals his Name, it being of more Conſequence to a wiſe Man what is ſaid, than who ſaid it. It appears from St. Auguſtine, that this Epiſtle was antiently inſcribed to the Parthians, becauſe in all Probability, St. John preached the Goſpel in Parthia. The other two Epiſtles are but ſhort, and directed to particular Perſons; the one a Lady of great Quality, the other to the charitable and hoſpitable Gaius, the kindeſt Friend, and the moſt courteous Entertainer of all indigent Chriſtians

Euſebius, and after him St. Jerom, inform us, that St. John having peruſed the other three Goſpels, approved and confirmed them by his Authority; but obſerving at the ſame time that theſe Evangeliſts had omitted ſeveral of our Bleſſed Saviour's Tranſactions, particularly thoſe which were performed before the Baptiſt's Impriſonment, he wrote his Goſpel to ſupply what was wanting in them; and becauſe ſeveral Heretics were at that Time ſprung up in the Church, who denied the Divinity of our Bleſſed Saviour, he took Care to guard againſt theſe Hereſies, by proving that our great Redeemer was God from Everlaſting. He largely records our Saviour's Diſcourſes, but takes little Notice of his Miracles, probably becauſe they are ſo fully and particularly related by the other Evangeliſts.

Before he undertook the Taſk of writing his Goſpel, he cauſed a general Faſt to be kept by all the Aſian Churches, to implore the Bleſſing of Heaven on ſo great and momentous an Undertaking. When this was done, he ſet about the Work, and compleated it in ſo excellent and ſublime a Manner that the Antients generally compared him to an Eagle's ſoaring aloft among the Clouds, whither the weak Eye of Man was not able to follow him. "Among all the evangelical Writers, ſays St. Baſil, none are like St. John, the Son of Thunder, for the Sublimity of his Speech, and the Height of his Diſcourſes, which are beyond any Man's Capacity fully to reach and comprehend." St. John, as a true Son of Thunder, ſays Epiphanius, by a Loftineſs of Speech peculiar to himſelf, acquaints us, as it were out of the Clouds and dark Receſſes of Wiſdom, with the divine Doctrine of the Son of God."

Such is the Character given of the Writings of this great Apoſtle and Evangeliſt, who was honoured with the endearing Title of being the beloved Diſciple of the Son of God; a Writer ſo profound as to deſerve, by Way of Eminence, the Character of St. John the Divine.

Saint PHILIP.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. Philip, from his Birth till the Time of Chriſt's Aſcenſion.

GAlilee, above all the Parts of Paleſtine, was remarkable for the rudeneſs and irreligion of its Inhabitants; and hence the Jews thought they could not fix a greater Mark of Ignominy on our Bleſſed Saviour, than by calling him a Galilean. Search and look, ſaid the Phariſees, for out of Galilee ariſeth no Prophet. But this ill-natured Reflection was abundantly diſproved by Facts, for Jonah was a Native of Galilee, and the Bleſſed Jeſus himſelf made it the chief Scene of his Miniſtry; and from hence he choſe thoſe excellent Perſons on whom he conferred the honour of the Apoſtulate, and empowered them to preach the glad Tidings of Salvation to the Children of Men.

Of this Number was St. Philip, a Native of Bethſaida, the City of Andrew and Peter. He had the Honour of being firſt called to be a Diſciple of the great Meſſiah, which happened in the following Manner: Our Bleſſed Saviour, ſoon after his return from the Wilderneſs, where he had been tempted by the Devil, met with Andrew and his Brother Peter, and after ſome Diſcourſe parted from them. The next Day, as he was paſſing through Galilee, he found Philip, whom he preſently commanded to follow him, the conſtant Form he made uſe of in calling his Diſciples, and thoſe that inſeperably attended him. So that the Prerogative of being firſt called, evidently belongs to St. Philip, he being the firſt of our Lord's Diſciples; for tho' Andrew and St. John were the firſt that came and converſed with the Saviour

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of the World, yet they immediately returned to their Occupation, and were not called till a whole Year after.

It may ſeem ſtrange that Philip ſhould at firſt ſight ſo readily comply with our Lord's Commands, as he had not yet ſeen any Miracle to confirm his divine Commiſſion, and prove himſelf the Saviour of the World, nor probably ſo much as heard any Tidings of the Meſſiah's Appearance. But it cannot be doubted, that notwithſtanding St. Philip was a Native of Galilee, yet he was excellently ſkilled in the Law and the Prophets. Metaphraſtes aſſures us, that he had, from his Childhood, been excellently educated; that he frequently read over the Books of Moſes, and attentively conſidered the Prophecies relating to the Meſſiah. And hence it is natural to ſuppoſe that he was fully awakened by the Expectations entertained by all the Jews, that the Meſſiah would ſoon appear, as the Time of his coming, according to the Prophets, was now expired. Add to this, that the Command of the Son of God was accompanied with a large Meaſure of the divine Grace, and we ſhall be convinced, that the Perſon who called him, was the expected Meſſiah.

Nor was our Apoſtle idle after the Honour he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the World; he immediately imparted the glad Tidings of the Meſſiah's Appearance to his Brother Nathaniel, and conducted him to him. So ready is a good Man to conduct others in the Paths that lead to Happineſs.

After his being called to the Apoſtulate, we have very little recorded of him by the Evangeliſts. It was however to him that our Saviour propoſed the Queſtion, where they ſhould find Bread ſufficiently to ſatisfy the hunger of ſo great a Multitude? To which Philip anſwered, that it was not eaſy to procure ſo large a Quantity; not conſidering, that it was equally eaſy for almighty Power to feed double the Number, when it pleaſed to exert itſelf. It was alſo to the ſame Apoſtle, that the Gentile Proſelytes, who came up to worſhip at Jeruſalem, applied, when they were deſirous to ſee the Saviour of the World. And it was with him our Lord had the Diſcourſe a little before the paſchal Supper

The holy and compaſſionate Jeſus had been fortifying their Minds with proper Conſiderations againſt his Departure from them, and had told them that he was going to prepare for them a Place in the Manſions of the heavenly Canaan; that he was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that no Man could come to the Father but by him; and that knowing him, they both knew and had ſeen the Father." Philip, not thoroughly underſtanding the Force of his Maſter's Reaſonings, begged of him that he would ſhew them the Father. We can hardly ſuppoſe that Philip ſhould have ſuch groſs Conceptions of the Deity, as to imagine the Father inveſted with a corporeal and inviſible Nature; but Chriſt having told them that they had ſeen him, and knowing that of old God frequently appeared in a viſible Shape, he only deſired that he would manifeſt himſelf to them by

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ſome ſuch Appearance. Our Lord gently reproved his Ignorance, that after attending ſo long to his Inſtructions, he ſhould not know, that he was the Image of his Father, the expreſs Characters of his infinite Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs appearing in him; that he ſaid and did nothing but by his Father's Appointment; which, if they did not believe, his Miracles were a ſufficient Evidence: that ſuch Demands were therefore unneceſſary and impertinent; and that it was an indication of great Weakneſs in him, after three Years Education under his Diſcipline and Inſtitution, to appear ſo ignorant with regard to theſe Particulars. And hence we ſhould do well to remember, that God expects Improvement according to the Opportunities Men enjoy. To be old and ignorant in the School of Chriſt deſerves both Reproach and Puniſhment: it is the Character of very bad Perſons, that they are ever Learning, but never come to the Knowledge of the Truth.

C H A P. II.

The Tranſactions of St. Philip, from the Aſcenſion of Chriſt to his martyrdom.

THE Ancients tell us, that in the Diſtribution made by the Apoſtle of the ſeveral Regions of the World, the Upper Aſia fell to his Share, where he applied himſelf with an indefatigable Diligence and Induſtry, to turn the Children of Men from the Paths of Wickedneſs which lead to Deſtruction, to Ways that terminate in eternal Felicity. And by the Conſtancy and Power of his Preaching, and the Efficacy of his Miracles, he gained numerous Converts, whom he baptized into the Chriſtian Faith, curing at once their Bodies of Infirmities and Diſtempers, and their Souls of Error and Idolatry. He continued with them a conſiderable Time in ſettling Churches, and appointing them Guides and Miniſters of Religion.

After ſeveral Years ſucceſsfully exerciſing his apoſtolical Office in all thoſe Parts, he came at laſt to Hierapolis in Phrygia, a City remarkably rich and populous, but at the ſame Time overrun with the moſt enormous Idolatry. Among the many vain and trifling Deities, to whom they paid religious Adoration, was a Serpent or Dragon, of an enormous Magnitude, which they worſhipped with the greateſt and moſt ſolemn Veneration.

St. Philip being grieved to ſee the People ſo wretchedly enſlaved by Error and Superſtition, continually offered his Addreſſes to Heaven, till by his Prayers,

Prayers, and often calling on the Name of Chriſt, he procured the Death, or, at leaſt, the Vaniſhing of this famous and beloved Serpent. Having thus demoliſhed their Deity, he demonſtrated to them how ridiculous and unjuſt it was for them to pay divine Honours to ſuch odious Creatures; ſhewed them that God alone was to be worſhipped as the great Parent of all the World, who, in the Beginning, made Man after his glorious Image, and when fallen from that innocent and happy State, ſent his own Son into the World to redeem him; that, in order to perform this glorious Work, he died on the Croſs, and roſe again from the Dead, and at the End of the World will come again to raiſe all the Sons of Men from the Chambers of the Duſt, and ſentence them to everlaſting Rewards and Puniſhments, according to their Works. This Diſcourſe rouſed them from their Lethargy; they were aſhamed of their late Idolatry, and great Numbers embraced the Doctrines of the Goſpel.

This provoked the great Enemy of Mankind, and he had recourſe to his old Methods, Cruelty and Perſecution. The Magiſtrates of the City ſeized the Apoſtle, and having thrown him into Priſon, cauſed him to be ſeverely ſcourged. When this preparatory Cruelty was over, he was led to Execution, and being bound, was hanged againſt a Pillar; or, according to others, crucified. But Omnipotence did not behold this Scene of Cruelty without teſtifying his Anger. For when this indefatigable Apoſtle was expiring, the Earth began ſuddenly to quake, and the Ground whereon the People ſtood to ſink under them; but, on their conſidering it as a Mark of the divine Vengeance, and imploring Pardon for their Crime, it ſuddenly ſtopt, and returned to its former Poſition. The Apoſtle being dead, his Body was taken down by St. Bartholomew, his Fellow-labourer in the Goſpel, and Mariamne, St. Philip's Siſter, the conſtant Companion of his Travels, and decently buried; after which they confirmed the People in the Faith of Chriſt, and departed from them.

All the antient Writers agree that he was a married Man; and Clemens of Alexandria, that he had Daughters, whom he diſpoſed of in Marriage. But he, not carefully diſtinguiſhing between Philip the Deacon, who lived at Ceſarea, with his three virgin Daughters, as mentioned in the Acts of the Apoſtles, has cauſed ſome Confuſion among the antient Authors. Nay, ſome have concluded, that they were one and the ſame Perſon, tho' the one was called to the Apoſtleſhip by our Lord himſelf, and the other only a Deacon choſen by the Apoſtles at Jeruſalem, after the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt.

St. Philip was one of thoſe Apoſtles who left no Writings behind him, being fully employed in Miniſtries more immediately uſeful to the Happineſs of Mankind.

Saint

Saint BARTHOLOMEW.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. Bartholomew, from his Birth to the Aſcenſion of his great Maſter.

THE evangelical Hiſtory of the Election of the Apoſtles, expreſsly tells us, that St. Bartholomew was one of the twelve. But becauſe he is but juſt named, without any farther Notice taken of him, the generality of Writers ancient and modern, ſuppoſe that he lay concealed under the Name of Nathanael, one of the firſt Diſciples that came to Chriſt. Accordingly, we may obſerve, that as St. John never mentions Bartholomew in the Number of the Apoſtles; ſo the other Evangeliſts take no Notice of Nathanael, probably as being the ſame Perſon under two different Names: and as in St. John, Philip and Nathanael are joined together in their coming to Chriſt; ſo in the reſt of the Evangeliſts, Philip and Bartholomew are conſtantly put together; certainly for no other Reaſon, than becauſe they were jointly called to the Diſcipleſhip. But what renders this Opinion ſtill more probable, is, that Nathanael is particularly mentioned among the other Apoſtles, to whom our Lord appeared at the Sea of Tiberias after his Reſurrection. And it is hard to give a Reaſon why Nathanael, "an Iſraelite indeed, in whom was no guile," and ſo early a Diſciple that he was a Witneſs of the whole Miniſtry, Doctrine, and mighty Power of the Bleſſed Jeſus, ſhould not have been propoſed as well as Barſabas or Matthias to have filled the vacant Place of Judas, if he had not been one of the twelve already.

Nor is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe that Bartholomew was his proper Name, any more than Bar-jona was the proper Name of Peter; but given to denote his relative Capacity, either as a Son or a Scholar. If it refers to his Father he was the Son of Thalmai, a

Name

Name not uncommon among the Jews: If to his Sect as a Scholar, he was of the Shool of the Tholmæans, ſo called from their Founder Thalmai, Scholar to Heber, the ancient Maſter of the Hebrews. Now it was uſual for Scholars, out of a great Reverence to their Maſter, or firſt Inſtitutor of the Order, to adopt his Name, as Ben ezra, Benuziel, and the like. But whichever of theſe Conjectures appears moſt ſatisfactory to the Reader, either will be ſufficient for my purpoſe; namely, to reconcile the Difference there ſeems to be between St. John and the other Evangeliſts about the Name of this Apoſtle, the one calling him by his proper Name, and the other by his relative or paternal Title.

The only objection againſt this Opinion is what was anciently hinted by St. Auguſtine, that it is not probable that our Bleſſed Saviour, who propoſed to confound the Wiſdom of this World by the preaching of illiterate Men, would chuſe Nathanael, a Doctor of the Law, to be one of his Apoſtles. But this Objection will appear to be built on a ſandy Foundation, if we conſider, that the ſame Argument is as ſtrong againſt Philip, of whoſe knowledge in the Law and the Prophets, there is as ſtrong Evidence in the Hiſtory of the Goſpel as for that of Nathanael; and may be urged with ſtill greater force againſt St. Paul, whoſe Abilities in human Learning were remarkably great, and few were more complete Maſters of the Jewiſh Law.

Having removed this Difficulty, I ſhall proceed to the Hiſtory of this Apoſtle, and conſider the Names of Nathanael and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the ſame Perſon.

With regard to his deſcent and Family, ſome are of Opinion that he was a Syrian, and that he was deſcended from the Ptolemies of Egypt; probably for no other Reaſon than the mere analogy and ſound of the Name. But it is plain from the Evangelical Hiſtory, that he was a Galilean, St. John having expreſsly told us, that Nathanael was of Cana in Galilee.

The Scripture is ſilent with regard to his Trade and manner of Life, tho' from ſome Circumſtances, there is room to imagine that he was a Fiſherman. But however that be, he was, at his firſt coming to Chriſt, conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long-expected Meſſiah, ſo often foretold by Moſes and the Prophets, " Jeſus of Nazareth the Son of Joſeph." And when he objected that the Meſſiah could not be born in Nazareth, Philip deſired him to come and ſatisfy himſelf.

At his Approach, our Bleſſed Saviour entertained him with this honourable Character, that he was an Iſraelite indeed, a Man of true Simplicity and Dignity, and indeed his Simplicity particularly appears in this, that when he was told of Jeſus, he did not object againſt the Meanneſs of his Original, the low Condition of his Parents, or the Narrowneſs of their Fortunes, but only againſt the Place of his Birth, which as he juſtly obſerved, could not be Nazareth, the Scriptures peremptorily foretelling, that the Meſſiah

ſhould be born at Bethlehem. By this therefore he appeared to be a "true Iſraelite, one that waited for Redemption in Iſrael," which from the Times mentioned in the Scripture Predictions, he knew to be near at Hand.

He was greatly ſurprized at our Lord's Salutation, wondering how he could know him at firſt ſight, being certain he had never before ſeen his Face. But he was anſwered, that he had ſeen him while he was yet under the Fig-tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this Inſtance of our Lord's Divinity, he preſently made this Confeſſion, that he was now ſure that Jeſus was the promiſed Meſſiah, the Son of God, whom he had appointed to govern his Church. Our Bleſſed Saviour told him, that if from this Inſtance he could believe him to be the Meſſiah, he ſhould have far greater Arguments to confirm his Faith; for that he ſhould hereafter behold the Heavens opened to receive him, and the Angels viſibly appearing to attend his triumphant Entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

CHAP. II.

The Tranſactions of St. Bartholomew, from the Aſcenſion of Chriſt, to his Martyrdom.

SOME Time after the viſible Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt on the Apoſtles, St. Bartholomew viſited different Parts of the World to preach the Goſpel, and penetrated as far as the hither India; and Euſebius tells us, that when Patenænus, a Perſon famous for his Skill in Philoſophy, but much more for his hearty Affection for Chriſtianity, in Imitation of the Apoſtles, was inflamed with a Deſire of propagating the Chriſtian Religion in the eaſtern Parts of the World, he found that ſome of the Inhabitants of India ſtill retained the Knowledge of Chriſt, and had among them St. Matthew's Goſpel, written in Hebrew, and, according to Tradition, left there by St. Bartholomew, when he preached the Goſpel in theſe Nations.

After ſpending a conſiderable Time in India, and the eaſtern Extremities of Aſia, he returned to the northern and weſtern Parts. And we find him at Hierapolis in Phrygia, labouring in Concert with St. Philip to plant Chriſtianity in thoſe Parts, and to convince the blind Idolaters of the Evil of their Ways, and direct them in the Paths that lead to the Regions of Felicity. This enraged the bigotted Magiſtrates, and he was, together with St. Philip, deſigned for Martyrdom; and in Order to this faſtened to a Croſs; but a ſudden

ſudden Trembling and Motion of the Earth convinced the Idolaters that the Juſtice of Omnipotence would revenge their Deaths; ſo that they took him immediately down from the Croſs and ſet him at Liberty.

From hence he retired into Lycaonia, and St. Chryſoſtom aſſures us, that he inſtructed and trained up the Inhabitants in the Chriſtian Diſcipline. His laſt Remove was to Albanople in Great Armenia, a Place miſerably over-run with Idolatry, from which he labour-ed to reclaim the People. But his endeavour to " turn them from Darkneſs unto Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God" were ſo far from having the deſired Effect, that it provoked the Magiſtrates, who prevailed on the Governor to put him to Death, which he chearfully underwent, ſealing the Truth of the Doctrine he had preached with his Blood.

Some of the Antients tell us that he was crucified with his Head downward; and others that he was flead alive. Perhaps he ſuffered both; for Plutarch records a particular Inſtance of Meſobates the Perſian Eunuch, who was firſt flead alive, and then crucified; and the Inhabitants of Albanople might eaſily borrow this barbarous and inhuman Cruelty from the Perſians.

Saint MATTHEW.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. Matthew, from his Birth to the Aſcenſion of his great Maſter.

ST. Matthew, called alſo Levi, though a Roman Officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean. Kirſten, an Arabian Author, tells us, that he was born at Nazareth, a City in the Tribe of Zebulun, famous for the Habitation of Joſeph and Mary, and the Place where our Bleſſed Saviour reſided the whole Time of his private Life. St. Matthew was the Son of Alpheus and Mary, Siſter or Kinſwoman to the Bleſſed Virgin; both originally deſcended from the Tribe of Iſſachar.

His Trade was that of a Publican, or Tax-gatherer to the Romans, an Office deteſted by the generality of Jews. Among the Romans indeed it was accounted a Place of Power and Credit, and as ſuch rarely conferred on any but Roman Knights: and T. Fl. Sabinus Father of the Emperor Veſpaſian, was the Publican of the Aſian Provinces, an Office which he diſcharged ſo greatly to the Satisfaction of the Public, that they erected Statues to him. Theſe Officers being ſent into the Provinces to gather the Tributes, generally employed the Natives under them, as Perſons beſt Skilled in the Affairs and Cuſtoms of their own Country.

This Office was, on two Accounts, odious to the Jews. Firſt, becauſe the Perſons who managed it were generally Covetous and great Exactors; for having themſelves farmed the Cuſtoms of the Romans, they uſed every Method of Oppreſſion, in Order to pay their Rents to the Romans, and procure an Advantage to themſelves. Of this Zaccheus the Chief of theſe Farmers was very ſenſible after his Converſion, when he offered to reſtore fourfold Reſtitution to all from whom he

he had taken any Thing by Fraud and Extortion. And upon this Account they became infamous even among the Gentiles themſelves, who commonly mention them as public Robbers, and worſe Members in a Community more voracious and deſtructive in a City than wild Beaſts in a Foreſt. The other particular which rendered them ſo hateful to the Jews was the Tribute they demanded, which they conſidered not only as a Burden but alſo as an Affront to their Nation? for they looked upon themſelves as a free People, having received that Priviledge immediately from God himſelf; and therefore they conſidered this Tribute as a daily and ſtanding Inſtance of their Slavery, which they deteſted above every Thing, and it was this that betrayed them into ſo many Rebellions againſt the Romans. We may add, that theſe Publicans were obliged by their Trade to have frequent Dealings and Converſation with the Gentiles, which the Jews conſidered as an Abomination; and though they were themſelves Jews, they rigorouſly exacted the Taxes of their Brethren, and thereby ſeemed to conſpire with the Romans to entail perpetual Slavery on their own Nation.

Theſe Particulars rendered the Publicans univerſally abhorred by the Jewiſh Nation, ſo that it was reckoned unlawful to aſſiſt them in the common Offices of Humanity, nay, they aſſerted it was no Crime to cheat and overreach a Publican, though they broke the Solemnity of an Oath; they might not eat or drink, converſe or travel with them: they were conſidered as common Thieves and Robbers, and the Money received of them was not permitted to be depoſited with others, conſidering it as gained by Rapine and Violence: they were not admitted to give Teſtimony in any Court of Juſtice: they were looked upon as ſo infamous, that they were not only baniſhed from all Communion in Matters of divine Worſhip, but ſhunned in all Affairs of civil Society and Commerce, as the Peſts of their Country, as Perſons whoſe Converſation was infectious, and not at all better than the Heathens themſelves. And hence they had a common Proverb among them, "Take not a Wife out of that Family in which there is a Publican, for they are all Publicans." That is, they are all Thieves, Robbers, and wicked Sinners. And to this proverbial Cuſtom our Bleſſed Saviour alludes, when ſpeaking of a hardened Sinner, on whom neither private Reproofs, nor the public Cenſures and Admonitions of the Church, can prevail, "Let him be to thee as an heathen Man and a Publican."

Of this Trade and Office was the Evangeliſt St. Matthew, and he ſeems to have been more particularly employed in collecting the Cuſtoms on Commodities that came by Sea into Galilee, and the Tribute which Paſſengers were to pay who went by Water. And for this Purpoſe the Office or Cuſtom-houſe ſtood by the Sea-ſide, that the Officers might be always at Hand;

Hand; and here it was, as St. Mark intimates, that Matthew ſat at the Receipt of Cuſtom.

Our Bleſſed Saviour having cured a Perſon long afflicted with the Palſy, retired out of Capernaum, to walk by the Sea-ſide, where he taught the People that flocked after him. Here he ſaw Matthew ſitting in his Office, and called him to follow him. The Man was rich, had a large and profitable Employment, was a wiſe and prudent Perſon, and doubtleſs underſtood what it would coſt him to comply with the Call of Jeſus. He was not ignorant that he muſt exchange wealth for Poverty, a Cuſtom-houſe for a Priſon, rich and powerful Maſters, for a naked and deſpiſed Saviour. But he overlooked all theſe Conſiderations, left all his Intereſt and Relations, to become our Lord's Diſciple, and to embrace a more ſpiritual Way of Commerce and Traffick.

We cannot ſuppoſe that he was before wholly unacquainted with our Saviour's Perſon or Doctrine, eſpecially as he reſided at Capernaum, where our Lord ſo often preached, and wrought his Miracles, by which he muſt, in ſome Meaſure be prepared to receive the Impreſſions which our Saviour's Call made upon him. And to ſhew that he was not diſcontented at his Change, he entertained both his Maſter and his Diſciples at his Houſe, calling together his Friends, eſpecially thoſe of his own Profeſſion, hoping, no doubt, that they might alſo be converted by the Company and Converſation of our Bleſſed Saviour.

The Phariſees, who ſought all Opportunities of raiſing Objections againſt the Doctrine of the Bleſſed Jeſus, took this Opportunity of ſuggeſting to his Diſciples, that it was highly unbecoming ſo pure and holy a Perſon, as their Maſter pretended himſelf to be, to converſe ſo familiarly with the worſt of Men, with Publicans and Sinners, Perſons infamous to a Proverb. But he preſently replied to them, that theſe were the Sick, and therefore needed the Phyſician; that his Company was of moſt Conſequence, where the Souls of Men moſt required it; that God himſelf preferred Works of Mercy and Charity, eſpecially in doing good to the Souls of Men, infinitely above all ritual Obſervances; and that the principal Deſign of his coming into the World was not to call the righteous, or thoſe who like themſelves vainly pretend to be ſo, but Sinners, Modeſt, Humble, ſelf-convinced Sinners, to Repentance, and to reduce them to a better State and Courſe of Life.

After St. Matthews's Election to the Apoſtulate, he continued with the reſt till the Aſcenſion of his great and beloved Maſter; but the Evangelical Writers have recorded nothing particular concerning him.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Tranſactions of St. Matthew, from the Aſcenſion of Chriſt, to his Martyrdom.

AFTER our Bleſſed Saviour's Aſcenſion into heaven, St. Matthew, for the firſt eight Years at leaſt, preached in different Parts of Judea; but afterwards he left the Country of Paleſtine to convert the Gentile World. Before his Departure, he was intreated by the Jewiſh Converts to write the Hiſtory of the Life and Actions of the Bleſſed Jeſus, and leave it among them as a ſtanding Monument of what he had ſo often delivered to them in his Sermons. This he readily complied with, as I ſhall more particularly mention in giving an Account of his Goſpel.

After his leaving Judea he travelled into ſeveral Parts, eſpecially Ethiopia, but the particular Places he viſited are not known with any certainty. Metaphraſtes tells us, that he firſt viſited Parthia, and after planting Chriſtianity in thoſe Parts, he travelled into Ethiopia; where by his preaching and Miracles, he triumphed over Superſtition and Idolatry, convinced Multitudes of the Error of their Ways, and prevailed on them to obey the Precepts of the Goſpel; ordained them ſpiritual Guides and Paſtors to confirm them in the Faith, and bring over others to the Religion of the Son of God.

After labouring indefatigably in the Vineyard of his Maſter, he ſuffered Martyrdom at a City of Ethiopia, called Naddabar: but by what kind of Death is not abſolutely known; though the general Opinion is, that he was ſlain with an Halbert.

St. Matthew was a remarkable Inſtance of the Power of Religion, in bringing Men to a better temper of Mind. If we reflect upon his Circumſtances while he continued a Stranger to the great Redeemer of Mankind, we ſhall find that the love of the World had poſſeſſed his Heart. He had acquired a plentiful Eſtate, was in Poſſeſſion of a very rich and profitable Trade, ſupported by the Power and Favour of the Romans, prompted by covetous Inclinations, and theſe confirmed by long Habits, and Cuſtoms. But notwithſtanding all this, no ſooner did Chriſt call him than he abandoned, without the leaſt ſcruple or heſitation, all his Riches; nay, he not only renounced his lucrative Trade, but ran the greateſt hazard of diſpleaſing the Maſters who employed him, for quitting their Service without giving him the leaſt Notice, and leaving his Accounts in Confuſion. Had our Bleſſed Saviour appeared as a ſecular Prince, clothed with temporal Power, and Authority

thority, it would have been no wonder for him to have gone over to his Service: but when he appeared under all the Circumſtances of Meanneſs and Diſgrace, when he ſeems to promiſe his Followers nothing but Miſery and Sufferings in this Life, and to propoſe no other rewards than the inviſible Encouragements of another World, his change appears truly wonderful and ſurpriſing. It was indeed ſo remarkable, that both Porphyry and Julian, two ſubtle Adverſaries of the Chriſtian Religion, took occaſion from hence to charge him either with Falſhood or Folly; with the former if he did not give a true Account of Things; and with the latter, if his Caſe was fairly repreſented, in ſo haſtily following the Perſon who called him. But theſe Detractors would have done well to remember, that the Holy Jeſus was no common Perſon; his Commands were attended with ſomething more than common. St. Jerom is of Opinion, that beſides the Divinity which evidently appeared in the Miracles of the Lamb of God, there was a divine Brightneſs and kind of Majeſty in his looks, which was at firſt ſight ſufficient to draw Perſons after him. But however that be, his miraculous Powers that reflected a Luſtre from every Quarter, and the Efficacy of his Doctrine accompanied with the divine Grace, made way for the Summons ſent to our Apoſtle, and enabled him to conquer all Oppoſitions, and all the Difficulties that oppoſed his obeying the Commands of his Saviour.

But his Contempt of the World ſtill farther appeared in his exemplary Temperance and Abſtemiouſneſs from all Delights and Pleaſures; nay even from the ordinary Conveniences and Accommodations of it. He was ſo far from indulging his Appetite with delicate Curioſities, that he refuſed to gratify it with lawful and ordinary Proviſions; his uſual Diet being only Herbs, Roots, Seeds, and Berries. But what appeared moſt remarkable in him, and which, tho' the leaſt Virtue in itſelf, is the greateſt in the Eſteem and Value of a wiſe Man, was his Humility. He was mean and modeſt in his own Opinion, always preferring others to himſelf: for whereas the other Evangeliſts in deſcribing the Apoſtles, by pairs, conſtantly place him before St. Thomas, he modeſtly places him before himſelf. The reſt of the Evangeliſts are careful to mention the Honour of his Apoſtleſhip, but ſpeak of his former ſordid, diſhoneſt, and diſgraceful Courſe of Life, only under the Name of Levi; while he himſelf ſets it down with all its Circumſtances, under his own proper and common Name. A Conduct which at once commends the prudence and Candour of the Apoſtle, and ſuggeſts to us this uſeful Reflection, That the greateſt Sinners are not excluded from divine Grace; nor can any, if penitent, have juſt Reaſon to Deſpair, when Publicans and Sinners find Mercy at the Throne of Grace. The Conduct of the other Evangeliſts with regard to St. Matthew, ſhould alſo teach us to uſe a penitent Brother with the greateſt Modeſty and Tenderneſs; it being contrary to the Rules

Rules of Civility, as well as the Laws of Religion, to upbraid and reproach a Perſon, after his repentance, with the Errors of his former Life.

The laſt Thing we ſhall remark in the Life of this Apoſtle is his Goſpel, written at the intreaty of the Jewiſh Converts, while he abode in Paleſtine; but at what Time is uncertain; ſome will have it to be written eight, ſome fifteen, and ſome thirty Years after our Lord's Aſcenſion. It was originally written in Hebrew; but ſoon after tranſlated into Greek, by one of the Diſciples, probably by St. James the Leſs. But whoever the Tranſlator was is of no Conſequence, becauſe the Verſion was well known to the Apoſtles and approved by them; and accordingly the Church has from the earlieſt Ages, received the Greek Copy as authentic, and placed it in the ſacred Canon.

After the Greek Tranſlation was entertained, the Hebrew Copy was chiefly owned and uſed by the Nazaræi, a middle Sect between Jews and Chriſtians: with the former they adhered to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Moſaic Law, and with the latter they believed in Chriſt, and embraced his Religion; and hence this Goſpel has been ſtyled, "The Goſpel according to the Hebrews, and The Goſpel of the Nazarenes." But after a Time it was interpolated by theſe Chriſtians, ſeveral Paſſages of the evangelical Hiſtory which they had heard from the Apoſtles, or from thoſe who had familiarly converſed with them, being inſerted; and to theſe Additions the Ancient Fathers frequently refer in their Writings. The Ebonites, on the contrary, ſtruck out many Paſſages, becauſe they were not favourable to their Tenets. A Hebrew Copy of St. Matthew's Goſpel, but whether exactly the ſame as that written by the Apoſtle is uncertain, was found among the other Books, in the Treaſury of the Jews at Tiberias, by one Joſeph a Jew, and, after his Converſion, a Man of great Honour and Eſteem in the Reign of Conſtantine. St. Jerom aſſures us, that another was kept in the Library at Ceſarea in his Time, and another by the Nazarenes at Berea, from whom he procured the liberty to tranſcribe it, and which he afterwards tranſlated both into Greek and Latin, with this remarkable Obſervation, that in quoting the Text of the Old Teſtament, the Evangeliſt immediately follows the Hebrew, without taking Notice of the Septuagint Tranſlation. A Copy of this Goſpel was alſo dug up in the Year 485 in opening the grave of St. Barnabas in Cyprus, tranſcribed with his own Hand. But theſe Copies have long ſince periſhed; and with regard to thoſe publiſhed ſince by Tile and Munſter, the barbarous and corrupt Stile ſufficiently demonſtrate that they were not Originals, but the Tranſlation of a more ignorant and corrupt Age.

Saint THOMAS.

CHAP. I.

The Tranſactions of St. Thomas, from his Birth to the Aſcenſion of our Bleſſed Saviour.

IT was cuſtomary for the Jews, when they travelled into foreign Countries, or familiarly converſed with the Greeks and Romans, to aſſume a Latin Name of the ſame Signification, or at leaſt that bore ſome Affinity with that by which they were known in their own Country. Thus our bleſſed Saviour was called Chriſt, anſwering to his Hebrew Title Meſſiah, the Anointed. Simon, who was called Cephas in Hebrew, was ſtiled Petros in Greek, both ſignifying a Rock: Tabitha was called Dorcas, both ſignifying a Goat: And thus Thomas, according to the Syriac Import of his Name, was called Didymus, both Appellations ſignifying a Twin.

The evangelical Hiſtory is entirely ſilent with Regard either to the Country or Kindred of St. Thomas. It is however certain that he was a Jew, and in all Probability a Galilean. Metaphraſtes tells us, that he was deſcended from very mean Parents, who brought him up to the Trade of Fiſhing; but at the ſame Time, took care to give him a more uſeful Education, inſtructing him in the Knowledge of the Scriptures, whereby he learned wiſely to govern his Life and Manners.

He was together with the reſt, called to the Apoſtleſhip, and not long after gave an eminent Inſtance of his being ready to undergo the moſt melancholy Fate that might attend him. For when the reſt of the Apoſtles diſſuaded their Maſter from going into Judea at the Time of Lazarus's Death, becauſe the Jews lately endeavoured to ſtone him, Thomas deſired them not to hinder his Journey thither, tho' it might coſt them all their Lives. "Let us go,

go, ſaid he, that we may die with him;" concluding that inſtead of Lazarus being raiſed from the dead, they ſhould all, like him, be placed in the Chambers of the Duſt. So that St. Thomas made up in pious Affection what he ſeemed to want in the Quickneſs of his Apprehenſion, not readily underſtanding ſome of our Lord's Diſcourſes, nor over-forward to believe more than what he had ſeen with his own Eyes.

When the Holy Jeſus a little before his Sufferings had been ſpeaking to them of the Joys of Heaven, and had told them that he was going to prepare Manſions for them, that they might follow him, and that they knew both the Place whither he was going, and the Way thither; our Apoſtle replied, that they knew not whither he was going, much leſs the Way that would lead them thither. To which our Lord returned this ſhort but ſatisfactory Anſwer, "I am the Way;" I am the Perſon whom the Father hath ſent into the World to ſhew Mankind the Paths that lead to eternal Life, and therefore you cannot miſs the Way if you follow my Example.

After the Diſciples had ſeen their great Maſter expire on the Croſs, their Minds were diſtracted by Hopes and Fears, concerning his Reſurrection, about which they were not then fully ſatisfied; which engaged him the ſooner to haſten his Appearance, that by the ſenſible Manifeſtations of himſelf he might put the Matter beyond all Poſſibility of Diſpute. Accordingly the very Day in which he aroſe from the Dead, he came into the Houſe where they were aſſembled, while for Fear of the Jews, the Doors were about them cloſe ſhut, and gave them ſufficient Aſſurance, that he was riſen from the Dead. At this Meeting Thomas was abſent, having probably never rejoined their Company ſince their Diſperſion in the Garden, when every one's Fears prompted him to conſult his own Safety. At his Return they told him that the Lord had appeared to them, but he obſtinately refuſed to give Credit to what they ſaid, or to believe that it was really he, preſuming it rather a Spectre or Apparition, unleſs he might ſee the very Print of the Nails, and feel the Wounds in his Hands and Side. A ſtrange Piece of Infidelity! Was it any Thing more than what Moſes and the Prophets had long ſince foretold? Had not our Lord frequently declared in plain Terms, that he muſt riſe from the dead the third Day? Could they queſtion the Poſſibility of what he told them, when they had ſo often ſeen him work the greateſt Miracles? Was it reaſonable to reject the Teſtimony of ſo many Eye-witneſſes, eſpecially as he was well aſſured of their Fidelity? Or could he think that either themſelves ſhould be deceived, or that they ſhould jeſt and trifle with him on ſo ſolemn and ſerious an Occaſion? In ſhort, it was a Stubbornneſs that might have betrayed him into an eternal Infidelity.

But our compaſſionate Saviour would not take the Advantage of his perverſe Obſtinacy, but on that Day Seven-night came again to them, as they were ſolemnly met at their Devotions, and

calling to Thomas, bade him look upon his Hands, put his Fingers into the Print of the Nails, and thruſt his Hand into his Side, to ſatisfy his Faith by a Demonſtration from the Senſes. Thomas was ſoon convinced of his Error and Obſtinacy, confeſſing that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Maſter, a God omnipotent, as he was thus able to reſcue himſelf from the Power of Death. Our Lord anſwered, that it was happy for him that he believed the Teſtimony of his own Senſes; but that it was a more noble and commendable Act of Faith, to acquieſce in a rational Evidence, and to receive the Doctrines and Precepts of the Goſpel upon ſuch Teſtimonies and Aſſurances as will ſatisfy a wiſe and ſober Man, though he did not behold them himſelf.

CHAP. II.

The Tranſactions of St. Thomas, from the Aſcenſion of the Son of God to his Death.

THE bleſſed Jeſus having left this Vale of Miſery, and beſtowed eminent Gifts and miraculous Powers on the Apoſtles, St. Thomas as well as the reſt preached the Goſpel in ſeveral Parts of Judea. And after the Diſperſion of the Chriſtian Church in Jeruſalem, repaired into Parthia the Province aſſigned him for his Miniſtry. After which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the Goſpel to the Medes, Perſians, Carmans, Hyrcani, Bactarians, and the neighbouring Nations. During his Preaching in Perſia, he is ſaid to have met with the Magi, or Wiſe Men, who had taken that long Journey at our Saviour's Birth to worſhip him, whom he baptized, and took with him as his Companions and Aſſiſtants in propagating the Goſpel.

Leaving Perſia he travelled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, healing their Sick, and working other Miracles, to prove he had his Commiſſion from on high. And after travelling through theſe Countries, he entered India.

Nicephorus tells us, that he was at firſt unwilling to enter theſe Countries, fearing he ſhould find their Manners as rude and intractable as their Faces were black and deformed, till, encouraged by a Viſion, wherein he was aſſured of the divine Preſence to aſſiſt him, he travelled a great Way into theſe eaſtern Countries, and even viſited the Iſland Taprobane, ſince called Sumatra, and the Country of the Brachmans, preaching every where with the greateſt Gentleneſs, and uſing the

the moſt perſuaſive Diſcourſes, not flying out into Invectives againſt their idolatrous Practices, but calmly inſtructing them in the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, perſuading them by Degrees to renounce their Follies, well knowing that confirmed Habits muſt be cured by Patience and Forbearance, by ſlow and gentle Methods; and by theſe Means he reclaimed the People from the groſſeſt Errors and Superſtitions, to an hearty Belief and Entertainment of the Chriſtian Religion.

When the Portugeſe firſt viſited theſe Countries, after their Diſcovery of a Paſſage by the Cape of Good Hope, they received the following Particulars, partly from ancient Monuments, and partly from conſtant and uncontroverted Traditions preſerved by the Chriſtians in thoſe Parts: Namely, that St. Thomas came firſt to Socotora, an Iſland in the Arabian Sea, and thence to Cranganor, where having converted many from the Error of their Ways, he travelled farther into the Eaſt; and having ſucceſsfully preached the Goſpel, returned back to the Kingdom of Coromandel, where at Malipur, the Metropolis of the Kingdom, not far from the Mouth of the Ganges, he began to erect a Place for divine Worſhip, till prohibited by the idolatrous Prieſts and Sagamo, Prince of that Country. But after performing ſeveral Miracles, the Work was ſuffered to proceed, and Sagamo himſelf embraced the Chriſtian Faith, whoſe Example was ſoon followed by great Numbers of his Friends and Subjects.

This remarkable Succeſs alarmed the Brachmans, who plainly perceived that their Religion would be ſoon extirpated, unleſs ſome Method could be found of putting a Stop to the Progreſs of Chriſtianity; and therefore reſolved to put the Apoſtle to death. At a ſmall Diſtance from the City was a Tomb, whither St. Thomas often retired for private Devotions. Hither the Brachmans and their armed Followers purſued him, and while he was intent at Prayer, they firſt ſhot at him a Shower of Darts, after which one of the Prieſts ran him through with a Lance.

His Body was taken up by his Diſciples, and buried in the Church he had lately erected, and which was afterwards improved into a Fabric of great Magnificence.

Some will have his Body to have been afterwards tranſlated to Edeſſa, a City of Meſopotamia; but the Chriſtians of the Eaſt affirm, that it always remained in the City near which he ſuffered Martyrdom; where it is ſaid to have been afterwards dug up by Command of Don Emanuel Frea, Governor of the Coaſt of Coromandel; and that near it were found the Bones of Sagamo, whom he had converted to the Chriſtian Faith.

While Don Alphonſo Souſa, one of the Viceroys of India under John III. King of Portugal, reſided in theſe Parts, certain Braſs Tables were brought to him, whoſe Inſcriptions appeared for ſome Time intelligible; but at laſt, by the Aſſiſtance of a learned Jewiſh Antiquarian, they were found to contain a Donation made to St. Thomas, whereby the King who then reigned, granted him a Piece of Ground for building

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a Church. They tell us alſo of a famous Croſs found in the Chapel of St. Thomas at Malipur, on which was an unintelligible Inſcription, till a learned Bramin expounded it to this Effect; that Thomas, a divine Perſon was ſent into thoſe Parts by the Son of God, in the Time of Sagamo, to inſtruct the People in the Knowledge of the true God; that he built a Church and performed aſtoniſhing Miracles, till he was ſlain by a Brachman, who thruſt him through with a Spear, while he was on his Knees at Prayers; and that the Croſs ſtained with his Blood, had been left as a Memorial of theſe Tranſactions. Which Interpretation was afterwards confirmed by another learned Bramin, who read the Inſcription to the ſame Effect.

It is ſaid that there are ſtill Chriſtians in India, deſcended from thoſe converted by our Apoſtle, thence called Chriſtians of St. Thomas. And the Portugueſe at their firſt Arrival in theſe Parts found them in great Numbers in ſeveral Places, ſome ſay fifteen or ſixteen thouſand Families. They are very poor, and their Churches generally mean; decorated with no Images, nor any other Repreſentation, except that of the Croſs. They are governed by a High-prieſt, who reſides in the Northern Parts of the Kingdom, who, together with twelve Cardinals, two Patriarchs, and ſeveral Biſhops, directs all ſpiritual Affairs; and to him all the Chriſtians of the Eaſt yield Subjection. They admit all promiſcuouſly to the Holy Communion, which they receive under both Kinds, though inſtead of Wine, which their Country does not afford, they uſe a kind of Liquor extracted from Raiſins ſteeped in Water. Children, unleſs in caſe of Sickneſs, are not baptized till the fortieth Day. At the Death of any Friend, the Kindred of the deceaſed keep an eight-day Feaſt in Memory of him. Every Lords Day they have their public Aſſemblies for Prayer and Preaching, and their Devotions are performed with great Reverence and Solemnity. Their Bible, at leaſt their New Teſtament, is in the Syriac Language, to the Study of which the Preachers earneſtly exhort the People. They obſerve the Times of Advent and Lent, the Feſtivals of our Lord and many Saints, the Sunday after Eaſter in Memory of the Confeſſion St. Thomas that Day made to his great Maſter, after he had been ſenſibly cured of his Unbelief. They have a kind of Monaſteries of the Religious, who live in great Abſtinence and Chaſtity. Their Prieſts are ſhaven in the form of a Croſs, have leave to marry once, but denied a ſecond Time. No Marriages are diſſolved but by Death. Theſe Rites and Cuſtoms they ſolemnly aver to have derived from the very Time of St. Thomas, and to have obſerved them with the greateſt Care and Diligence to this very Day.

St. Chryſoſtom ſays, that St. Thomas who at firſt was the weakeſt and moſt incredulous of all the Apoſtles, became, through Chriſt's Condeſcenſion to ſatisfy his Scruples, and the Power of the divine Grace, the moſt active and invincible of them all; travelling over moſt Parts of the World, and living without Fear in the midſt of barbarous Nations.

Saint

Saint JAMES the Leſs.

IT will be neceſſary before we enter upon the Life of this Apoſtle to remove ſome Difficulties relating to his Perſon. It has been doubted by ſome, whether this was the ſame with that St. James, who was afterwards Biſhop of Jeruſalem, two of this Name being mentioned in the ſacred Writings, namely, St. James the Great, and St. James the Leſs, both Apoſtles; the Antients mention a third ſirnamed the Juſt, which they will have to be Diſtinct from the former, and Biſhop of Jeruſalem. But this Opinion is built on a ſandy Foundation. For nothing is plainer than that St. James the Apoſtle, whom St. Paul calls our Lord's Brother, and rec kons with Peter and John, one of the Pillars of the Church, was the ſame who preſided among the Apoſtles, doubtleſs by Virtue of his epiſcopal Office, and determined the Cauſes in the Synod of Jeruſalem. Nor do either Clemens Alexandrinus or Euſebius mention any more than two, St. James ſlain by Herod, and St. James the Juſt, Biſhop of Jeruſalem, whom they expreſsly affirm to be the ſame with him whom St. Paul calls Brother of our Lord.

Having removed the Difficulties with regard to his Perſon, I ſhall proceed to the Hiſtory of his Life. It is reaſonable to think that he was the Son of Joſeph afterwards the Huſband of Mary, by his firſt Wife, whom St. Jerom ſtiles Eſcha, and adds, that ſhe was the Daughter of Aggi, Brother to Zaccharias, the Father of John the Baptiſt. Hence he was reputed our Lord's Brother. We find indeed ſeveral mentioned as the Brethren of our Saviour in the evangelical Hiſtory; but in what Senſe was greatly controverted by the Ancients St. Jerom, St. Chryſoſtom, and ſome others, will have them to be called from their being the Sons of Mary, Couſin-german, or, according to the Hebrew Idiom, Siſter to the Virgin Mary. But Euſebius, Epiphanius, and many others tell us they were the Children of Joſeph by a former Wife. And this ſeems moſt natural and beſt agrees with what the Evangeliſts ſay of them, when they enumerate the Queſtions of the Jews: "Is not this the Carpenter's

Son

Son? Is not his Mother called Mary? and his Brethren James and Joſes, and Simeon and Judas? and his Siſters are they not all with us, whence then has this Man theſe Things?" By which it is plain, that the Jews underſtood theſe Perſons not to be Chriſt's Kinſmen only, but his Brethren, the ſame Carpenter's Sons having the ſame Relation to him, that Jeſus himſelf had. Indeed they had more, Chriſt being only his reputed, they his natural Sons. Upon this Account the bleſſed Virgin is ſometimes called the Mother of James and Joſes; and by this Name we frequently find her mentioned by the Evangeliſts in relating our Lord's Crucifixion. And tho' ſhe was only Mother-in-law to St. James, yet the Evangeliſts might chuſe to ſtile her ſo, becauſe ſhe was commonly called his Mother after the Death of Joſeph: Perhaps ſhe herſelf choſe that Title, that the Son of God, whom as a Virgin ſhe had brought into the World, might be the better concealed, and leſs expoſed to the envious Malice of the Jews. To this it may be added, that Joſephus, who was eminently ſkilled in Matters of Genealogy and Deſcent, expreſsly ſays, that St. James was the Brother of Jeſus Chriſt. There is indeed one Objection againſt this, namely, that he is called the Son of Alpheus. But this may mean no more, than either that Joſeph was called by another Name, a Thing very common among the Jews, or that James himſelf was a Diſciple of ſome particular Sect or Synagogue called Alpheans, there being many ſuch Sects among the Jews about this Time.

With Regard to the Place of his Birth, the ſacred Hiſtory is ſilent. The Jews in their Talmud call him a Man of the Town of Sechania; but where that Place was ſituated is uncertain. Nor is it known what his particular Way or Courſe of Life was before he was called to the Apoſtleſhip; the ſacred Writers having been ſilent with Regard to this particular, mentioning nothing concerning him during our Saviour's Life.

After the Reſurrection he was honoured with a particular Appearance of our Lord to him, which, tho' paſſed over in Silence by the Evangeliſts, is recorded by St. Paul. St. Jerom, from the Hebrew Goſpel of the Nazarenes, which contains ſeveral particulars omitted by the Evangelical Hiſtorians, gives the following Relation of his Appearance to our Apoſtle. St. James had ſolemnly ſworn, that from the Time he had drank of the Cup at the Inſtitution of the Supper, he would eat Bread no more, till he ſaw the Lord riſen from the Dead. Our Lord therefore being returned from the Grave came and appeared to him, commanded Bread to be ſet before him, which he took, Bleſſed, and brake, and gave to St. James; ſaying, "Eat thy Bread my Brother, for the Son of Man is truly riſen from among them that Sleep".

Some Time after the Reſurrection of our Saviour, he was choſen Biſhop of Jeruſalem, preferred before all the Reſt for his near Relation to Chriſt; and for the ſame Reaſon we find Simon choſen

ſen to be his immediate Succeſſor in that ſee, becauſe, after St. James, he was our Lord's next Kinſman: a Conſideration that made Peter and the two Sons of Zebedee, tho' they had been peculiarly honoured by our Saviour, not to contend for this high and honourable Station, but freely choſe James the Juſt Biſhop of Jeruſalem. This Dignity is indeed ſaid by ſome of the Ancients to have been conferred on him by Chriſt, who conſtituted him Biſhop at the Time of his Appearing to him. But it is ſafeſt to follow the general Opinion, that this Dignity was conferred upon him by the Apoſtles; tho' poſſibly they might receive ſome Intimations concerning it from our Lord himſelf.

When St. Paul came to Jeruſalem, after his Converſion, he applied to St. James, and was by him honoured with the right Hand of Fellowſhip. And it was to St. James that Peter ſent the News of his miraculous Deliverance out of Priſon. Go, ſaid he, "ſhew theſe Things to James and to the Brethren;" that is, to the whole Church, eſpecially to St. James the Paſtor of it.

Our Apoſtle was remarkably active in the Synod of Jeruſalem, when the great Cauſe relating to the Moſaick Rites was debated: for the Cauſe being opened by Peter, and farther debated by Paul and Barnabas, St. James ſtood up to paſs the final and decretory Sentence, That the Gentile Converts were not to be loaded with the Jewiſh Yoke, a few indifferent Rites only being ordered to be obſerved, in Order to produce an Accommodation between the Jews and Gentiles, uſhering in the Expedient with this poſitive Concluſion, "This is my Sentence and Determination." A Circumſtance the more conſiderable, becauſe ſpoken at a Time when Peter was in Council, and produced no ſuch Intimation of his Authority.

He performed every Part of his Duty with all poſſible Care and Induſtry, omitting no particular neceſſary to be obſerved by a diligent and faithful Guide of Souls; ſtrengthening the Weak, inſtructing the Ignorant, reducing the Erroneous, reproving the Obſtinate; and, by the Conſtancy of his Sermons, conquering the Stubbornneſs of that perverſe and refractory Generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better Sort being perſuaded to embrace the Chriſtian Faith.

But a Perſon ſo careful, ſo ſucceſsful in his Charge, could not fail of awakening the Spite and Malice of his Enemies: a Sort of Men of whom the Apoſtle has given too true a Character, that "they pleaſe not God, and are contrary to all Men." They were vexed to ſee St. Paul had eſcaped their Hands by appealing unto Cæſar: Malice is as greedy and inſatiable as Hell itſelf, and as they could not have their Revenge on St. Paul, they turned their Fury againſt St. James: but being unable to effect their Deſign under the Government of Feſtus, they determined to attempt it under the Procuratorſhip of Albinus his Succeſſor, Ananus the Younger of the Sect of the Sadducees, being high Prieſt. They were however

fearful that Albinus would oppoſe their Deſign, and therefore thought it the ſureſt Method to diſpatch him, if poſſible, before the new Governor arrived.

In order to this a Council was ſummoned, and the Apoſtle with others arraigned and condemned as Violaters of the Law. But that the Action might appear more plauſible and popular, the Scribes and Phariſees, Maſters in the Art of Diſſimulation, endeavoured to enſnare him: and, at their firſt coming, told him, that they had all placed the greateſt Confidence in him; that the whole Nation, as well as they, gave him the Title of a juſt Man, and one that was no reſpecter of Perſons; that they therefore deſired he would correct the Error and falſe Opinion the People had conceived of Jeſus, whom they conſidered as the Meſſiah, and take this Opportunity of the univerſal Confluence to the Paſchal Solemnity, to ſet them right in their Opinions in this particular, and would go with them to the Top of the Temple, where he might be ſeen and heard by all.

The Apoſtle readily conſented, and being advantageouſly placed on a Pinnacle of the Temple, they addreſſed him in the following Manner: "Tell us, O Juſtus! whom we have all the Reaſon in the World to believe, that the People are thus generally led away with the Doctrine of Jeſus, who was crucified; tell us, what is this Inſtitution of the crucified Jeſus?" To which the Apoſtle anſwered, with an audible Voice; "Why do you enquire of Jeſus, the Son of Man? He ſits in Heaven at the right Hand of the Majeſty on high, and will come again in the Clouds of Heaven." The People below hearing this, glorified the Bleſſed Jeſus, and openly proclaimed, "Hoſanna the Son of David."

The Scribes and Phariſees now perceived that they had acted fooliſhly; that inſtead of reclaiming, they had confirmed the People in their Error; and that there was no Way left but to diſpatch him immediately, in Order to warn others, by his Sufferings, not to believe in Jeſus of Nazareth. Accordingly they ſuddenly cried out, That Juſtus himſelf was ſeduced and become an Impoſtor; and immediately threw him from the Pinnacle on which he ſtood, into the Court below; but not being killed on the Spot, he recovered himſelf ſo far as to riſe on his Knees, and pray fervently to Heaven for his Murderers. But Malice is too diabolical to be pacified with Kindneſs, or ſatisfied with Cruelty. Little Portions of Revenge ſerve only to inflame it, and rouſe it up to greater Acts of Cruelty. Accordingly his Enemies, vexed that they had not fully accompliſhed their Work, poured a Shower of Stones upon him, while he was imploring their Forgiveneſs at the Throne of Grace; and one of them, more merciful than the reſt, put an End to his Miſery with a fuller's Club.

Thus did this great and good Man finiſh his Courſe in the ninety-ſixth Year of his Age; and about twenty-four Years after our Bleſſed Saviour's Aſcenſion into Heaven. His Death was lamented by all good Men, even by the

the ſober and juſt Perſons among the Jews themſelves, as Joſephus himſelf confeſſes. He was buried, according to Gregory of Tours, on Mount Olivet, in a Tomb he had built for himſelf, and in which he had buried Zacharias and old Simeon. Hejeſippus ſays he was buried in the Court of the Temple, where he ſuffered Martyrdom; and that a Monument was there erected to his Memory. But the former ſeems more agreeable to Reaſon; for the Jews very rarely buried any Perſon in the City, much leſs in the Courts of the Temple; and therefore it is not natural to think they would permit that Honour to be paid to him they had ſo lately put to Death as an Impoſtor.

He was a Man of exemplary Piety and Devotion, educated under the ſtricteſt Rules and Inſtitutions of Religion, a prieſt of the ancient Order of the Rechabites, or rather, as Epiphanius Conjectures, according to the moſt ancient Order and Form of Prieſthood, when the ſacerdotal Office was the Prerogative of the firſt-born: but whether this kind of Prieſthood was at any Time obſerved under the Moſaic Diſpenſation, we are no where told in ſacred Writ. But however that be, it is certain that he had the Privilege of entering the Sanctuary, or holy Place, when he pleaſed, though none but Prieſts of the Order of Aaron were permitted to enter there beſides himſelf. Prayer was his conſtant Buſineſs and Delight; he ſeemed to live upon it, and to have continually his Converſation in Heaven: and therefore uſed conſtantly to repair into the Temple to pray, which he always performed kneeling, and with the greateſt Reverence, till by his daily Devotions his Knees were become hard and callous like thoſe of a Camel. And he who has told us, "that the Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much," found it ſo by his own Experience, Heaven lending a more immediate ear to his Petitions; ſo that in a Time of remarkable Drought, on his praying for Rain, the Clouds melted into fruitful Showers.

Nor was his Charity towards Men leſs than his Piety towards God; he did good to all, watched over the Souls of Men, and ſtudied to advance their eternal Welfare; his daily Errand into the Temple was to prey for the Happineſs of the People, and that God would not ſeverely reckon with them: he could forgive his moſt inveterate Enemies, and overcome Evil with Good: when thrown from the Top of the Temple, he made uſe of his lateſt Breath in ſending up Petitions to Heaven for the pardon of his Murderers, "I beſeech thee, O Almighty Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

He was of a remarkably meek and humble Temper, honouring what was excellent in others, concealing what was valuable in himſelf: neither the Eminency of his Relation to the Bleſſed Jeſus, nor the Dignity of the Place he ſo worthily filled, could induce him to entertain lofty Thoughts of himſelf above the reſt of his Brethren; on the contrary, he ſtrove to conceal whate-

ver might place him in a higher Rank than the other Diſciples of the Lord of Glory. Tho' he was Brother to the Redeemer of Mankind, he ſtiles himſelf only " the Servant of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt;" not ſo much as mentioning his being an Apoſtle.

His Temperance was admirable, wholly abſtaining from Fleſh, drinking neither Wine nor ſtrong Drink, and never uſing the Bath. His holy and mortified Mind was contented with the meaneſt Accommodations; he went bare-foot, and never wore any other than Linen Garments. He lived indeed after the ſtricteſt Rules of the Nazarite Order; and as the Mitre he wore on his Head evinced his Prieſthood, which was rather from Melchiſedek than Aaron; ſo his never ſhaving his Head, or uſing any Ointments, his habit and diet, and the great ſeverity of his Life ſhewed him to belong to the Nazarite Inſtitution, to which he was conſecrated even from his Mother's Womb. A Man of ſo divine a Temper that he was at once the love and wonder of his Age; and from the Reputation of his holy and religious Life, was ſtiled James the Juſt. He was indeed the Safety and Happineſs of the Nation, which was reckoned to depend upon his Prayers and Intereſt with Heaven, and hence he acquired the title of " Oblias or Ozliam, the Defence and Fortreſs of the People;" indicating that when he was no more their Caſtles would be diſmantled, and their Strength laid level on the Ground. And ſo indeed it proved; for a few Years after his Death, the Roman Army broke in upon them, and filled the Country with Blood and Slaughter. It is indeed no Wonder that the Judgments of the Almighty like a Flood ſhould come rolling in upon a Nation, when the Sluices are plucked up, and Moſes taken away, that ſtood in the Gap to oppoſe them.

In ſhort, St. James was the Delight of all good Men, and in ſo great Favour and Eſtimation with the People, that they uſed to flock after him, and ſtrive who ſhould touch, if it were only the Border of his Garment; his very epiſcopal Chair, as Euſebius informs us, wherein he uſed to ſit, was carefully preſerved, and had a kind of Veneration paid it, even in his Time. He was beloved not only by his Friends but alſo by his Enemies, and the Jews themſelves mention St. James in their Talmud, as a Perſon who wrought Miracles in the Name of Jeſus, his Maſter; and the wiſeſt of them conſidered his Martyrdom as the principal Cauſe of all thoſe Miſeries and Calamities that ſoon after flowed in upon them. Joſephus in particular reckons the Death of St. James, as the Action that more immediately rouſed the divine Vengeance, and haſtened the univerſal Ruin of that Nation.

He wrote only one Epiſtle, probably not long before his Martyrdom, as appears from ſome paſſages in it relating to the near approach of the Deſtruction of the Jews. He directed it to the Jewiſh Converts, diſperſed up and down thoſe eaſtern Countries, to comfort them under their Sufferings and

and confirm them againſt Error. He ſaw a great degeneracy and declenſion of Manners coming on; and that the Purity of the Chriſtian Faith began to be undetermined by the Doctrines and Practices of the Gnoſtics, who, under pretence of Zeal for the legal Rites, generally mixed themſelves with the Jews; he beheld Libertiniſm flowing in apace, and the way to Heaven made ſoft and eaſy, Men declaiming againſt good Works as uſeleſs and unneceſſary; and aſſerting, that a naked Belief was ſufficient to Salvation. Theſe Doctrines the Apoſtle oppoſes, preſſes the Purity, Patience, Charity, and all the Virtues of a good Life; and, by undeniable Arguments proves, that ſuch a Faith alone can juſtify us before God, and open for us the Gates of eternal Life.

Saint S I M O N the Zealot.

ST. Simon the Apoſtle was as ſome think, one of the four Brothers of our Saviour, Sons of Joſeph by his former Marriage; though the only Proof of it is, that one of theſe was called Simon, too weak an Argument to found any on, except a bare Conjecture. In the Catalogue of the Apoſtles, he is ſtiled Simon the Canaanite, whence ſome conjecture he was born in Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to have been the Bridegroom mentioned by St. John at whoſe Marriage our Bleſſed Saviour turned the Water into Wine. But this Word has no relation to his Country, or the Place of his Nativity, being derived from the Hebrew Word knah, which ſignifies Zeal, and denotes a warm and ſprightly Temper. What ſome of the Evangeliſts therefore call Canaanite, others rendering the Hebrew by the Greek Word, ſtile Zealot: not from his great Zeal, his ardent Affection to his Maſter, and his Deſire of advancing his Religion in the World, but from his warm active Temper, and zealous Forwardneſs in ſome particular Sect of Religion before his coming to our Saviour.

In order to underſtand this the better, it will be neceſſary to obſerve, that as there were ſeveral Sects and Parties among the Jews, ſo there was one, either a diſtinct Sect, or at leaſt a Branch of the Phariſees, called the Sect of the Zealotes. They were remarkable Aſſertors of the Honour of the Law, and the ſtrictneſs and purity of Religion, aſſuming a Liberty to themſelves of queſtioning notorious Offenders, without ſtaying for the ordinary Formalities of Law; nay, they did not ſcruple, when they thought it neceſſary, to inflict capital Puniſhments upon them. Thus when a Blaſphemer curſed God by the Name of any Idol, the Zealot who firſt met him had the Liberty of killing him, without carrying him before the Sanhedrim. They conſidered themſelves as the Succeſſors of Phineas, who in Defence of the Honour of God inflicted Death on Zimri and Coſbi. An Act which was" counted unto him for Righteouſneſs unto all Poſterity for evermore;" and God was ſo well

pleaſed

pleaſed with it, that he made "with him and his Seed after him the Covenant of an everlaſting Prieſthood, becauſe he was zealous for his God, and made an Attonement for Iſrael." In Imitation of this Action of Phineas, the Sect of the Zealotes took upon them to execute Puniſhments in extraordinary Caſes; and that not only by the Connivance, but with the leave both of the Rulers and People, till in proceſs of Time their Zeal degenerated into all kinds of Licentiouſneſs and wild Extravagance; and they not only became the Peſts of the Common-wealth at home, but opened the Door for the Romans to break in upon them, to their final and irrevocable ruin. They were continually prompting the People to throw off the Roman Yoke, and aſſert their natural Liberty, taking care when they had thrown all Things into Confuſion to make their own Advantage of the Tumult. Joſephus gives a large Account of them, and every where bewails them as the great Plague of the Nation. He tells us, that they did not ſcruple to rob, and even kill the prime Nobility, under Pretence of their holding Correſpondence with the Romans, and betraying the Liberties of their Country; openly boaſting that by theſe Actions they were Benefactors and Defenders of the People. They even abrogated the Succeſſion of ancient Families, thruſting obſcure and ignoble Perſons into the Prieſthood, in order to gain the moſt infamous Villains over to their Party. And not being content with injuring Men, they affronted Heaven itſelf, proclaimed Defiance to the Almighty, by breaking into, and profaning his Sanctuary.

Many Attempts were made, eſpecially by Annas the High-prieſt, to reduce them to Order, and oblige them to obſerve the Rules of Sobriety; but all were in vain. They continued their violent Proceedings, and joining with the Idumeans, committed every kind of Outrage. They broke into the Sanctuary, ſlew the Prieſts themſelves before the Altar, and filled the Streets of Jeruſalem with Tumults, Rapine, and Blood. Nay, when Jeruſalem was cloſely beſieged by the Roman Army, they continued their deteſtable Proceedings, creating freſh Tumults and Factions, and were indeed the principal Cauſe of the ill Succeſs of the Jews in that fatal War.

This is a true Account of the Sect of the Zealots; but it is not to be ſuppoſed that all the Individuals of that Sect were of ſuch abandoned Principles; ſome of them were doubtleſs good Men, and animated only by a Zeal for Religion; it ſhould alſo be obſerved that they were not arrived to that height of Impiety at the Time of our Bleſſed Saviour.

But whatever St. Simon was before, we have no reaſon to ſuſpect, but after his Converſion he was very zealous for the Honour of his Maſter, and conſidered all thoſe who were Enemies to Chriſt as Enemies to himſelf, however near they might be to him in any natural Relation. And as he was very exact in all the practical Duties of the Chriſtian

Chriſtian Religion, ſo he ſhewed a very ſerious and pious Indignation towards thoſe, who profeſſed Religion, and a Faith in Chriſt with their Mouths, but diſhonoured their ſacred Profeſſion, by their irregular and vicious Lives, as many of the firſt Chriſtians really did.

Theodoret tells us that St. Simon the Zealot was of the Tribe of Zebulun or Napthali, and that by this particular he was diſtinguiſhed from St. Simon, a Relation of our bleſſed Saviour, and after St. James, Biſhop of Jeruſalem, who was of the Tribe of Judah. But there are ſtronger Reaſons to prove this difference, the Authority of Euſebius, who never calls Simon, Biſhop of Jeruſalem, an Apoſtle, but ſays expreſsly, that the Apoſtolic Age ended with the Death of St. John, whom Simon, Biſhop of Jeruſalem, ſurvived.

St. Simon continued in Communion with the reſt of the Apoſtles and Diſciples at Jeruſalem; and at the Feaſt of Pontecoſt, received the ſame miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt: So that he was Qualified with the reſt of his Brethren for the Apoſtolick Office, in propagating the Goſpel of the Son of God. And we cannot doubt of his exerciſing his Gifts with the ſame Zeal and Fidelity, though in what Part of the World is uncertain. Some ſay he went iuto Egypt, Cyrene and Africa, preaching the Goſpel to the Inhabitants of thoſe remote and barbarous Countries. And others add, that after he had paſt through thoſe burning Waſtes, he took Ship and viſited the frozen Regions of the north, preaching the Goſpel to the Inhabitants of the Weſtern Parts, and even in Britain itſelf; where, having converted great Multitudes, ſuſtained the greateſt Hardſhips and Perſecutions, was at laſt crucified, and buried in ſome Part of Great Britain, but where is unknown.

Saint

Saint JUDE.

THIS Apoſtle is mentioned by three ſeveral Names in the Evangelical Hiſtory, namely Jude, or Judas, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus. The firſt he had in common with the other Jews, and in Honour of one of The Twelve Patriarchs; the other two might be added to the former, partly to diſtinguiſh him from Judas the Traitor, who had rendered the Name odious to the Chriſtians, and partly as a Commendation of his Wiſdom and Zeal: for Lebbeus, according to St. Jerom, ſignifies a Man of Underſtanding, and Thaddeus imports divine Fervour; and hence ſome of the Fathers call him Zelotes.

He was Brother to St. James the Leſs, afterwards Biſhop of Jeruſalem, being the Son of Joſeph, the reputed Father of Chriſt, by a former Wife. It is not known when, or by what Means he became a Diſciple of our bleſſed Saviour, nothing being ſaid of him, till we find him in the Catalogue of the twelve Apoſtles; nor afterwards till Chriſt's laſt Supper, when diſcourſing with them about his Departure, and comforting them with a Promiſe, that he would return to them again, meaning after his Reſurrection, and that the "World ſhould ſee him no more, though they ſhould ſee him," our Apoſtle ſaid to his Maſter, "Lord how is it that thou wilt manifeſt thyſelf to us, and not unto the World?" It ſeems from this Queſtion, that St. Jude expected that the Meſſiah would eſtabliſh a ſecular Kingdom; and therefore could not reconcile the Solemnity and Grandeur of it, with the private Manifeſtations of Chriſt to his Diſciples only. But the Anſwer ſatisfied him that the World was not capable of theſe divine Manifeſtations, the glorious appearing of the Meſſiah, as having rejected both him and his Doctrine, and therefore for the future his intimate Converſe, and ſpecial Acts of Grace and Favour ſhould be reſtrained only to thoſe who made worthy Returns, by Acts of mutual Love to him, and Regard to his Pecepts.

St. Jerom will have it, that it was St. Jude the Apoſtle whom St. Thomas ſent, ſoon after our Lord's aſcenſion to

Edeſſa, to heal Abagarus. But this is a Miſtake, it being Thaddeus one of the ſeventy Diſciples, and not Judas Thaddeus the Apoſtle, who was ſent to Abagarus, as we ſhall ſhew in the Life of that Diſciple.

Paulinus tells us that the Province which fell to the ſhare of St. Jude in the Apoſtolic Diviſion of the Provinces, was Libya, but he does not tell us whether it was the Cyrenean Lybia, which is thought to have received the Goſpel from St. Mark, or the more ſouthern Part of Africa. But however that be, in his firſt ſetting out to preach the Goſpel, he travelled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria into Idumea, and to the Cities of Arabia and the neighbouring Countries, and afterwards to Syria and Meſopotamia. Nicephorus adds, that he came at laſt to Edeſſa, where Abagarus governed, and where Thaddeus one of the Seventy had already ſown the Seeds of the Goſpel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having by his Sermons and Miracles eſtabliſhed the Religion of Jeſus, he died in Peace; but others ſay that he was ſlain at Berytes, and honourably buried there. The Writers of the Latin Church are unanimous in declaring, that he travelled into Perſia, where, after great Succeſs in his apoſtolical Miniſtry for many Years, he was at laſt, for his free and open reproving their ſuperſtitious Rites and Cuſtoms of the Magi, cruelly put to Death.

It is evident from Euſebius, that St. Jude was a married Man, for he mentions two of his Grandſons of whom Hegiſippus gives the following Account. The Emperor Domitian, during the Perſecution he raiſed againſt the Chriſtians about the Year of Chriſt 91, commanded, that if any of the Poſterity of David and Kindred of Chriſt, were ſtill alive, they ſhould be put to Death, as having a dangerous Title to the Government. Accordingly, the two Grandſons of St. Jude were brought before him, and upon Examination owned, with great Boldneſs and Sincerity that they were Deſcendants from the Houſe of David, but at the ſame Time Perſons of very narrow Fortunes; having only a few Acres of Land, which they cultivated themſelves, and out of the Profits of it paid his Tribute, and maintained themſelves and Families: Adding, that the hardneſs of the Hands was a ſufficient Proof that they were no Strangers to Labour and Toil. He then aſked them concerning the Meſſiah and the State of his Kingdom, what kind of Empire it was, and when and where it would commence. To which they anſwered, that though the Meſſiah was indeed a King, yet it was not on Earth but in Heaven; and that his Kingdom would not appear till the End of the World, when he would come in the Clouds of Heaven and reward every Man according to his Works: Theſe Anſwers ſatisfied Domitian, who, obſerving the Meanneſs and Simplicity of the Men, ſet them at liberty as Perſons beneath his Fears and Jealouſies. Tertullian adds, that he immediately put an End to the Perſecution he had raiſed againſt the

the Chriſtians; and that the Grandſons of St. Jude were afterwards Chiefs and Governors in the Church, and lived till the Reign of Trajan.

St. Jude left only one Epiſtle, which is placed the laſt of thoſe ſeven, ſtiled Catholic, in the ſacred Canon. It hath no particular Inſcription as the other ſix have, but is thought to have been primarily intended for the Chriſtian Jews, in their ſeveral Diſperſions, as St. Peter's Epiſtles were. In it he tells them, "That he at firſt intended to write to them in general of the common Salvation, and eſtabliſh and confirm them in it: but ſeeing the Doctrine of Chriſt attacked on every Side by Hereticks, he conceived it more neceſſary to ſpend his Time in exhorting them to fight manfully in Defence of the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and oppoſe the falſe Teachers who laboured ſo indefatigably to corrupt it."

The Hereticks meant in this Epiſtle were the Nicolaitans, the Gnoſtics, the Followers of Simon Magus, and others of the ſame Kind, whoſe Morals were as corrupt as their Doctrine, truſting to Faith without Works as ſufficient to their Salvation. So that the Subject of St. Jude's Epiſtle is nearly the ſame with that of the ſecond of St. Peter, whoſe Senſe he generally follows, and often uſes the very ſame Expreſſions: Only as the Infection had ſpread itſelf farther, and had gotten more Ground, he ſeems to oppoſe thoſe Hereticks with more Zeal and Sharpneſs than St. Peter had done. But becauſe true Chriſtian Charity, though it be zealous, yet is without Bitterneſs and Hatred, he exhorts the Chriſtians to uſe gentle Methods, with thoſe deluded People, and to pluck them as Brands out of the Fire; meaning by Fire their impious Principles and Practices, which, if continued in, would certainly conſume them. He ſeems expreſsly to cite St. Peter's ſecond Epiſtle, and to intimate plainly that moſt of the Apoſtles were Dead. So that his Epiſtle ſeems not to have been Written till after Nero's Reign and the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

It was ſometime before this Epiſtle was generally received in the Church.

The Author indeed, like St. James, St. John, and ſometimes St. Paul himſelf, does not call himſelf an Apoſtle, ſtiling himſelf only the Servant of Chriſt. But he has added what is equivalent, Jude the Brother of James, a Character that can belong to none but our Apoſtle. And ſurely the Humility of a Follower of Jeſus ſhould be no Objection againſt his Writings.

But one great Objection againſt this Epiſtle was the Apoſtle's mentioning the Tradition of "Michael the Archangel contending with the Devil about the Body of Moſes," but he has done no more than St. Paul in naming Jannes and Jambres; namely, alledging a Story which was then current and acknowledged by the Jews, though nothing of it was inſerted in the ſacred Writings; ſo that St. Jude reaſons with the Jews from their own Authors and Conceſſions.

His alledging the Prophecy of Enoch, is arguing in a ſimilar Manner, by reciting and referring to ſome known

and common Tradition then current among them. To this Purpoſe the Hebrew Author of the Book entitled Sepher Jeſher ſpeaks of Enoch in a ſimilar Manner. Thus St. Jude in both theſe Inſtances uſes their own Teſtimonies againſt themſelves. As if he had ſaid, Theſe Men ſpeak evil of Dignities; whereas they have a Story current among them, that even Michael the Archangel did not ſpeak evil of the Devil, when he was ſtriving with him about the Body of Moſes. And though they ſhew and own a Prophecy of Enoch concerning God's coming to Judgment, they Diſpute this very Tenet.

Thus have I obviated the Difficulties that have ariſen concerning the Epiſtle of St. Jude, and Euſebius tells us, that in his Time moſt Churches read it publickly: It is indeed evident, that before the Cloſe of the fourth Age it was acknowledged as canonical Scripture by general Conſent in the Councils of Laodicea and Carthage.

Saint

Saint MATTHIAS.

AS St. Matthias was not an Apoſtle of the firſt Election, immediately called and choſen of the Son of God himſelf, it cannot be expected, that any Account of him can be found in the evangelical Hiſtory. He was one of our Lord's Diſciples, probably one of the ſeventy, that had attended on him the whole Time of his public Miniſtry, and after his Death was elected into the Apoſtulate, to ſupply the Place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Maſter, laid violent Hands on himſelf; vainly hoping to find a Sanctuary in the Grave, and meet with that eaſe in another World, he was denied in this. How dreadful are the Stings of a Guilty Conſcience! The ſecret Arts of Wickedneſs may indeed for a while prevent the Stroke, but every Affliction, or petty Accident will awaken it into horror, and rouſe this internal Vicegerent of the Almighty, like an armed Man!

The Defection of Judas having made a Vacancy in the apoſtolic College, the firſt Thing they did after their Return from mount Olivet, when their great Maſter aſcended to the Throne of his Glory, was to fill up this Vacancy with a proper Perſon. Accordingly Peter acquainted them that Judas, according to the prophetical Prediction, being fallen from his Miniſtry, it was neceſſary that another ſhould be ſubſtituted in his Room, and at the ſame Time requiſite that the Perſon elected ſhould have been a conſtant Attendant on the Bleſſed Jeſus, that he might be the better qualified for bearing Witneſs to his Life, Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion.

After this Speech of St. Peter, two Perſons were propoſed, Joſeph called Barſabas, and Matthias, both duly qualified for the important Office. The Method of Election was by Lots, a way common both among the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficulty Caſes, eſpecially in chuſing Judges or Magiſtrates. And this Courſe ſeems to have been taken by the Apoſtles, becauſe the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, by whoſe immediate Dictates and Inſpirations they were afterwards chiefly guided.

And

And that the Buſineſs might proceed with the greater Alacrity and Succeſs, they firſt ſolemnly made their Addreſſes to Heaven, that the omniſcient Being who governed the World, and perfectly underſtood the Tempers and Diſpoſitions of Men, would immediately guide and direct the Choice, and ſhew them which of the two he would appoint to take that Part of the apoſtolick Charge from which Judas was ſo lately fallen. The Prayer being ended the Lots were drawn, by which it appeared that Matthias was the Perſon, and he was accordingly numbered among the twelve Apoſtles.

Not long after this Election the promiſed Powers of the Holy Ghoſt were conferred upon the Apoſtles, to qualify them for that great and difficult Employment upon which they were ſent, the eſtabliſhing the holy Religion of the Son of God among the Children of Men.

St. Matthias ſpent the firſt Years of his Miniſtry in Judea, where he reaped a very conſiderable Harveſt of Souls, and then travelled into different Parts of the World, to publiſh the glad Tidings of Salvation to People who had never yet heard of a Saviour. But the particular Parts he viſited are not certainly known. The Greeks ſuppoſe that he travelled Eaſtward: St. Jerom ſays, his principal Reſidence was near the Influx of the River Apſarus into the Haven of Hyſcus in Cappadocia. But the People were remarkably rough and uncivilized, ſo that it is no wonder that he at laſt fell a Victim to their Ferocity; though this did not happen till after he had long indefatigably laboured in the Vineyard of his great Maſter, and brought over vaſt Numbers to the Chriſtian Religion.

It is uncertain by what kind of Death he left the Regions of Mortality, and ſealed the Truth of the Goſpel he had ſo aſſiduouſly preached with his Blood. Dorotheus ſays he finiſhed his Courſe at Sebaſtople, and was buried there near the Temple of the Sun. An ancient Matyrology reports him to have been ſeized by the Jews, and as a Blaſphemer to have been ſtoned and then beheaded. But the Greek Offices, ſupported herein by ſeveral ancient Breviaries, tell us that he was crucified. His Body is by ſome pretended to be now at Rome, where ſome Relicks of it are ſhewn with great Veneration; while others contend that it is at Triers in Germany. Bollandus is of Opinion, that the Body of Matthias, now at Rome, is that of Matthias, who was Biſhop of Jeruſalem in the Year 120, and whoſe Hiſtory they have confounded with that of the Apoſtle St. Matthias.

Saint

Saint MARK.

ST Mark, tho' his Name ſeems of Roman original, was deſcended from Jewiſh Parents, and of the Tribe of Levi. Nor was it uncommon among the Jews to change their Names on ſome remarkable Revolutions or Accidents of Life, or when they intended to travel into any of the European Provinces of the Roman Empire.

The Ancients generally conſider him as one of the ſeventy Diſciples; and Epiphanius expreſsly tells us, that he was one of thoſe who, taking Exception at our Lord's Diſcourſe of "eating his fleſh and drinking his Blood, went back and walked no more with him." But there appears no Manner of Foundation for theſe Opinions, nor for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the Son of St. Peter's Siſter. Nay Pepias, Biſhop of Hierapolis, who lived near the Apoſtolic Times, poſitively affirms that he was neither a Hearer nor Follower of our Saviour. It is therefore moſt probable, that he was converted by ſome of the Apoſtles, perhaps by St. Peter, whom he conſtantly attended in his Travels, ſupplying the Place of an Amanuenſis and Interpreter. For though the Apoſtles were divinely inſpired, and had among other miraculous Powers, the Gift of Tongues conferred upon them; yet the Interpretation of Tongues was a Gift more peculiar to ſome than to others. And this probably was St. Mark's Talent in expounding St. Peter's Diſcourſes whether by Word or Writing, to thoſe who were Strangers to the Language in which they were delivered. But however this be, he accompanied him in his Apoſtolical Progreſs, preached the Goſpel in Italy, and at Rome; where, at the Requeſt of the Chriſtians of thoſe Parts, he compoſed and wrote his Goſpel.

Euſebius tells us that St. Mark was ſent into Egypt by St. Peter to preach the Goſpel, and accordingly planted a Church in Alexandria the Metropolis of it; and his Succeſs was ſo very remarkable that he converted Multitudes both of Men and Women, perſuading them not only to embrace the Chriſtian Religion, but alſo a Life of more than ordinary Strictneſs. That there was indeed a Sect in Egypt remarkably

remarkably ſtrict in their Diſcipline is evident from Philo, who gives the following Account of them.

" There is, ſays he a Sort of Perſons in many Parts of the World, eſpecially near the Marœotick Lake in Egypt, who have formed themſelves into religious Societies, and lead a Strict Philoſophical and contemplative Courſe of Life. when they firſt enter on this Manner of living, they renounce all ſecular Intereſts and Employments, and leaving their Eſtates to their Relations, retire into Gardens, and Places devoted to Solitude and Contemplation. Their Houſes or Colleges are not contiguous, that being free from Noiſe and Tumult, they might the better attend to the Deſigns of a contemplative Life; nor yet removed at too great a Diſtance that they may maintain mutual Society, and be conveniently capable of helping and aſſiſting one another. In each of theſe Houſes is an Oratory, called Semion and Monaſterion, in which they diſcharge the more ſecret and ſolemn Rites of their Religion; divided in the Middle by a Partition-wall, three or four Cubits high, one Apartment being for the Men, and the other for the Women. Here they publickly meet every ſeventh Day, where, being ſeated according to their Seniority, and having compoſed themſelves with great Decency and Reverence, the moſt aged Perſon amongſt them, and the beſt ſkilled in the Dogmata and Principles of their Inſtitution, comes forth into the midſt, gravely and ſoberly diſcourſing on what may make the greateſt Impreſſion on their Minds; the Reſt attending with the moſt profound Silence, and only teſtifying their Aſſent with the Motion of their Eyes or Head. Their Diſcourſes are commonly myſtical and allegorical, ſeeking hidden Senſes under plain Words; and of ſuch an allegorical Philoſophy the Books of their Religion left them by their Anceſtors conſiſts: the Law they compare to an Animal, the Letters of it reſembling the Body, while the Soul of it lies in theſe abſtruſe and recondite Notions, which the external Veil and Surface of the Words conceal from common Underſtandings. With Regard to their Method of living, they take very little care of their Bodies, ſpending their whole Time in perfecting their Minds by Precepts of Wiſdom and Religion; the Day they wholly ſpend in pious and divine Meditations, in reading and expounding the Law and the Prophets, and the holy Volumes of the ancient Founders of their Seat, and in ſinging Pſalms to the Honour of their Maker; abſolutely Temperate and Abſtemious, neither eating nor drinking till Night, the only Time they think proper to refreſh and regard the Body; and ſome of them, out of an inſatiable Deſire of growing in Knowledge and Virtue, faſt many Days together. Their Diet is plain and ſimple, ſufficient only to ſatisfy the calls of Nature, a little Bread, Salt, and Water being their conſtant Bill of Fare. Their Clothes are as mean as their Food, deſigned only as a preſent Security againſt Cold and Nakedneſs. Nor is this the caſe only of the Men, but

but alſo of the pious and devout Women that live among them; who religiouſly obſerve every ſeventh Day, and eſpecially the preparatory Week to the great Solemnity, which they keep with all the Expreſſions of a moſt ſevere Abſtinence and Devotion."

Theſe excellent Perſons, Euſebius affirms to have been Chriſtians, converted and brought under ſuch admirable Rules and Inſtitutions by St. Mark at his coming thither, accommodating all Paſſages to the Manners and Diſcipline of the Chriſtians; and is followed by Epiphanius, Jerom, and others. But whoever ſeriouſly and impartially conſiders Philo's Account will plainly find that he intends it of Jews, and Profeſſors of the Moſaic Religion, though what particular Sect they were, I ſhall not pretend to determine; perhaps they were Eſſenes. But however that be, it is plain they were not Chriſtians, for Philo ſpeaks of them as an Inſtitution of ſome ſtanding; whereas the Chriſtians had but very lately appeared in the World, eſpecially in Egypt. Beſides, many Parts of Philo's Account does not in ſeveral Parts agree with the State and Manners of the Chriſtians at that Time; as that they withdrew themſelves from publick Converſation, and all the Affairs of civil Life, which the Chriſtians never did, but when forced to it by violent Perſecutions, for at other times as Juſtin Martyr and Tertullian tell us, they mixed themſelves promiſcuouſly with the Inhabitants of the Country, dwelt in Towns and Cities, plowed their Lands, and followed their reſpective Trades and Callings like other Men. Nor can the Books which Philo tells they had, beſides thoſe of Moſes and the Prophets, be underſtood of thoſe of the Chriſtians; for the Writings of the Evangeliſts had been very lately publiſhed, and conſequently could not come under the Character of ancient Authors. Not to mention that ſome of their Ceremonies were ſuch as the Chriſtians of thoſe Days were abſolute Strangers to, not being introduced into the Church till ſeveral Years, and ſome of them not till ſome Ages after Philo wrote his Account. Nay ſome of them were never uſed by the primitive Chriſtians, eſpecially their religious Dances, which Philo particularly deſcribes, as uſed by them at their feſtival Solemnities, eſpecially that remarkable one which they obſerved at the End of every ſeven Weeks; when their entertainment being ended, they all roſe up, the Men in one Company and the Women in another, dancing with various Meaſures and Motions, each Company ſinging divine Hymns and Songs, and having a Precentor going before each Diviſion, ſinging alternately; till in the Concluſion, they joined in one common Chorus, in Imitation of the Triumphant Song ſung by Moſes and the Iſraelites, after their great Deliverance at the Red Sea.

Hence, and ſeveral other particulars that might be mentioned it will appear, that theſe could not be Chriſtians. It is not indeed to be doubted, but that Perſons educated under ſuch excellent Rules and Methods of Life were more than ordinarily prepared for the Reception of Chriſtianity, and could not fail of rendering St. Mark's Succeſs

ſurpriſing in thoſe Parts, and open a Path for Men to come in Multitudes to embrace the Doctrines of the Goſpel.

St. Mark did not confine himſelf to Alexandria, and the oriental Parts of Egypt, but removed Weſtwards to Lybia, paſſing through the Countries of Marmarcia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where though the People were both barbarous in their Manners and idolatrous in their Worſhip, yet by his Preaching and Miracles he prevailed on them to embrace the Tenets of the Goſpel; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the Faith.

After this long Tour he returned to Alexandria, where he preached with the greateſt Freedom, ordered and diſpoſed of the Affairs of the Church, and wiſely provided for a Succeſſion by conſtituting Governors and Paſtors of it. But the reſtleſs Enemy of the Souls of Men would not ſuffer our Apoſtle to continue in Peace and Quietneſs. For while he was aſſiduouſly labouring in the Vineyard of his Maſter, the idolatrous Inhabitants about the Time of Eaſter, when they were celebrating the Solemnities of Serapis, tumultuouſly entered the Church, forced St. Mark, then performing divine Service, from thence; and binding his Feet with Cords, dragged him through the Streets, and over the moſt craggy Places to the Bucelus, a Precipice near the Sea, leaving him there in a loneſome Priſon, for that Night; but his great and beloved Maſter appeared to him in a Viſion, comforting and encouraging his Soul, under the Ruins of his ſhattered Body. The next Morning early the Tragedy began afreſh, dragging him about in the ſame cruel and barbarous Manner, till he expired. But their Malice did not end with his Death; they burnt his mangled Body, after they had ſo inhumanly deprived it of Life; but the Chriſtians after the helliſh Tragedy was over, gathered up his Bones and Aſhes, and decently interred them near the Place where he uſed to preach. His Remains were afterwards, with great Pomp, removed from Alexandria to Venice, where they are religiouſly honoured, and he adopted as the titular Saint and Patron of that State.

He ſuffered Martyrdom on the 25th of April, but the Year is not abſolutely known; the moſt probable Opinion however is, that it happened about the End of Nero's Reign.

St. Mark, as to his Perſon was of a middle Size and Stature, his Noſe long, his Eye-brows turning back, his Eyes graceful and amiable, his Head bald, his Beard thick and grey, his Gait quick, and the Conſtitution of his Body ſtrong and healthful.

His Goſpel, the only writing he left behind him, was, as I have before obſerved, written at the intreaty and earneſt Deſire of the Converts at Rome, who not content to have heard St. Peter preach, preſſed St. Mark his Diſciple, to commit to writing an hiſtorical Account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal Faithfulneſs and Brevity, and being peruſed and approved by St. Peter, was commanded to be publickly

lickly read in their Aſſemblies. It was frequently ſtiled St. Peter's Goſpel, not becauſe he dictated it to St. Mark, but becauſe the latter compoſed it from the Accounts St. Peter uſually delivered in his Diſcourſes to the People. And this is probably the Reaſon of what St. Chryſoſtom obſerves, that in his Stile and Manner of Expreſſion he delights to imitate St. Peter, repreſenting a great Deal in a few Words. The remarkable Impartiality he obſerved in all his Relations is plain from hence, that he is ſo far from concealing the ſhameful lapſe and denial of Peter, his dear Tutor and Maſter, that he deſcribes it with more aggravating Circumſtances than any of the other Evangeliſts. The Venetians pretend to have the original Greek Copy of St. Mark's Goſpel, written with his own Hand. But this Manuſcript, if writen by St. Mark, is now uſeleſs, the very Letters being by length of Time, rendered illegible.

Saint LUKE.

ST. Luke hath had the ſame Fate with St. Mark, to be repreſented as one of thoſe Diſciples who deſerted our Lord, on occaſion of his Diſcourſe concerning his Fleſh and Blood, and that he was afterwards recovered by St. Paul; alſo that he was one of thoſe two Diſciples to whom our Lord preſented himſelf on the Day of his Reſurrection, as they were travelling from Jeruſalem to Emmaus: Which ſome are ſo far from allowing, that they affirm he never ſaw our Lord, and found their Aſſertion in his own Words, at the beginning of his Goſpel. But the learned Dr. Whitby obſerves, that thoſe Words in St. Luke, which mention his receiving the Facts concerning our Lord from thoſe who were Eye and Ear Witneſſes of them, are ſo far from giving any Ground to this Aſſertion, that they fairly plead for St. Luke's perſonal Knowledge of all the Things written in his Goſpel, even from firſt to laſt.

He was born at Antioch, the Metropolis of Syria, a City celebrated for the Pleaſantneſs of its Situation, the Fertility of its Soil, the Riches of its Commerce, the Wiſdom of its Senate, and the Civility and Politeneſs of its Inhabitants, by the Pens of ſome of the greateſt Orators of thoſe Times. It was eminent for Schools of Learning, which produced the moſt renowned Maſters in the Arts and Sciences. So that being born, as it were, in the Lap of the Muſes, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenious and liberal Education. But he was not contented with the Learning of his own Country: He travelled for Improvement into ſeveral Parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly ſkilled in Phyſick which he made his Profeſſion. But they who would from his Particular infer the Quality of his Birth and Fortune, ſeem to forget that the healing Art was in theſe early Times generally practiſed by Servants; and hence Grotius is of Opinion, that St. Luke was carried to Rome, and lived there a Servant to ſome noble Family in Quality of Phyſician: But after obtaining his Freedom he returned into his own Country, and probably continued his Profeſſion till his Death, it being ſo highly

conſiſtent

conſiſtent with, and in many Caſes ſubſervient to the Care of Souls.

He is alſo famous for his Skill in another Art, namely, Painting, and an ancient Inſcription found in a Vault near the Church of St. Maria de Via Lata at Rome, ſuppoſed to have been the Place where St. Paul dwelt, which mentions a Picture of the Bleſſed Virgin, UNAEA vii. AB LUCA DEPICTIS, being one of the ſeven painted by St. Luke.

St. Luke was a Jewiſh Proſelyte; but when he became a Chriſtian is uncertain. Thoſe who underſtand him in the beginning of his Goſpel, to ſay that he had the Facts from the Reports of others, who were Eye-witneſſes, ſuppoſe him to have been converted by St. Paul; and that he learned the Hiſtory of his Goſpel from the Converſation of that Apoſtle, and wrote it under his Direction; and that when St. Paul, in one of his Epiſtles, ſays according to my Goſpel, he means this of St. Luke, which he ſtiles his, from the great Share he had in the Compoſition of it.

On the other Hand, thoſe who hold that he wrote his Goſpel from his own perſonal Knowledge, obſerve, that he could not receive it from St. Paul, as an Eye-witneſs of the Matters contained in it; becauſe all thoſe Matters were tranſacted before his Converſion; and that he never ſaw our Lord before he appeared to him in his Journey to Damaſcus, which was ſome Time after he aſcended into Heaven. Conſequently, when St. Paul ſays, according to my Goſpel, he means no more than that Goſpel in general which he preached; the whole preaching of the Apoſtles being ſtiled the Goſpel.

They farther obſerve, that it is not probable that St. Luke was converted by St. Paul, becauſe the latter would in that Caſe have ſtiled him his Son; it being the conſtant Practice of the Apoſtles to call all eminent Converts by that Appellation; but he mentions him by the Name of Luke the beloved Phyſician. They therefore ſuppoſe that he ſtudied the Law in one of the Schools of Jeruſalem, where he was converted by our Lord, and was one of the ſeventy Diſciples.

But however this be, St. Luke became the inſeparable Companion of St. Paul in all his Travels, and his conſtant Fellow-labourer in the Work of the Miniſtry. He followed him in all his Dangers, was with him at his ſeveral Arraignments at Jeruſalem, accompanied him in his tedious and dangerous Voyage to Rome, where he ſtill attended on him, to adminiſter to him in his Neceſſities, and ſupply thoſe miniſterial Offices, which the Apoſtle's confinement would not ſuffer him to undertake; and eſpecially in carrying Meſſages to other Churches, where he had planted the Chriſtian Religion. This infinitely endeared him to St. Paul who ſeemed delighted with owning him for his Fellow-labourer, and in calling him The beloved Phyſician, and the Brother whoſe Praiſe is in the Goſpel.

In all Probability he did not leave St. Paul till he had finiſhed his Courſe, and received the Crown of Martyrdom; though

though ſome tell us that he left St. Paul at Rome, and returned back into the Eaſt, travelling into Egypt and ſeveral Parts of Libya, where he preached the Goſpel, wrought Miracles, converted Multitudes, and conſtituted Guides and Miniſters of Religion; nay, that he himſelf undertook the epiſcopal Charge of the City of Thebais. Epiphanius tells us, that he firſt preached in Dalmatia and Galatia, then in Italy and Macedonia where he ſpared no Pains, declined no Dangers, that he might faithfully diſcharge the Truſt committed to him.

The Ancients are not very well agreed, either about the Time or Manner of his Death; ſome affirming him to die in Egypt, others in Greece, the Roman Matyrology in Bythinia, and Dorotheus at Epheſus; ſome will have it that he died a natural, and others a violent Death. Indeed neither Euſebius nor St. Jerom take any Notice of it; but Gregory Nazianzen, Paulinus, Biſhop of Nola, and ſeveral others expreſly aſſert that he ſuffered Martyrdom; and Nicephorus gives us this particular Account of it, That coming into Greece, he ſucceſsfully preached the Goſpel, and baptized many Converts into the Chriſtian Faith; till, at laſt, a Party of Infidels oppoſed his Doctrines: But, being unable to ſilence him by Reaſon and Argument, they had recourſe to Cruelty, dragged him from the Place where he was teaching the Goſpel, and hung him on an Olive Tree, in the eightieth, or according to St. Jerom, in the eighty-fourth Year of his Age. Kirſtenius thinks, he ſuffered Martyrdom at Rome, ſoon after St. Paul's firſt Impriſonment; becauſe he did not continue his Acts of the Apoſtles any farther; which it is natural to think he would have done, had he lived any conſiderable Time after St. Paul's departure. His Body was afterwards, by the Command of Conſtantine, or his Son Conſtantius, removed, with great Solemnity to Conſtantinople, and buried in the great Church, erected to the Memory of the Apoſtles.

He wrote two Books for the Uſe of the Church, his Goſpel and the Acts of the Apoſtles; both which he dedicated to Theophilus, which many of the Ancients ſuppoſe to be a feigned Name, denoting a Lover of God, a Title common to all ſincere Chriſtians. But others think it was a real Perſon, becauſe the Title of moſt excellent is attributed to him; the uſual Title and Form of Addreſs in thoſe Times to Princes and great Men. Probably he was ſome Magiſtrate, whom St. Luke had converted and baptized; and to whom he dedicated theſe Books, not only as a Teſtimony of honourable Reſpect, but alſo as a Means of giving him farther certainty and aſſurance of thoſe Things wherein he had inſtructed him.

His Goſpel contains the principal Tranſactions of our Lord's Life; and the Particulars omitted by him are, in general, of leſs Importance than thoſe of the other Evangeliſts.

With Regard to the Acts of the Apoſtles written by St. Luke, the Work was no doubt performed at Rome, about

about the Time of St. Paul's impriſonment there, with which he concludes his Story. It contains the Actions, and ſometimes the Sufferings of the principal Apoſtles, eſpecially St. Paul, whoſe Activity in the Cauſe of Chriſt, made him bear a greater Part in the Labours of his Maſter; and St. Luke being his conſtant Attendant, an Eye-witneſs of the whole Carriage of his Life, and privy to his moſt intimate Tranſactions, was conſequently capable of giving a more full and ſatisfactory Account of them. Among other Things, he enumerates the great Miracles the Apoſtles did, in Confirmation of their Doctrine.

In both theſe Treatiſes, his Manner of Writing is exact and accurate; his Stile noble and elegant, ſublime and lofty, and yet clear and perſpicuous, flowing with an eaſy and natural Grace and Sweetneſs, admirably adapted to an hiſtorical Deſign. In ſhort, as an Hiſtorian, he was faithful in his Relations, and elegant in his Writings; as a Miniſter, careful and diligent for the good of Souls; as a Chriſtian devout and pious; and to crown all the reſt, laid down his Life, in Teſtimony of that Goſpel he had both preached and publiſhed to the World.

Saint

Saint THADDEUS.

ST. Thaddeus is generally ſuppoſed to have been the Brother of St. Thomas, and one of our Saviour's ſeventy Diſciples: He is not mentioned particularly in the Evangelical Hiſtory, but in common with the reſt of the ſeventy conſtantly attended the Diſcourſes, and was an Eye-witneſs of the Miracles of his great Maſter, the Son of the living God.

Soon after the Aſcenſion of the great Redeemer of Mankind, Thaddeus was ſent by Jeruſalem for Edeſſa, to heal king Abagarus, and convert him and his People to the Chriſtian Faith.

Abagarus, or Abgarus, King of Edeſſa, was afflicted with a very grievous Diſeaſe, for which he could find no Remedy; and while he lay in this Condition, he was informed of the miraculous Cures which were performed by Jeſus Chriſt in Judea. Upon this he ſent a Courier to him, whoſe Name was Ananias, with a Letter drawn up in theſe Terms: Abagarus, King of Edeſſa, to Jeſus the merciful Saviour of Mankind, who has appeared clothed with human Fleſh in the Country of Jeruſalem, with Health.

"I have been made acquainted with the Prodigies and Cures wrought by you, without the Uſe of Herbs or Medicines; and by the Efficacy of your Words, I am told that you make Cripples and the Maimed to walk; that you force Devils from the Bodies of them poſſeſſed; that there is no Diſeaſe, however incurable it may ſeem to be, which you do not heal; and that you reſtore the Dead to Life. Theſe Wonders perſuade me that you are ſome God deſcended from Heaven; that you are the Son of God. For this Reaſon I have taken the Liberty to write this Letter to you, beſeeching you to come and ſee me, and cure me of the Indiſpoſition under which I have ſo long laboured. I underſtand that the Jews perſecute you, murmur at your Miracles, and ſeek your Deſtruction. I have here a beautiful and agreeable City, which, tho' it be not very large, will be ſufficient to ſupply you with every Thing that ſhall be neceſſary."

Jeſus Chriſt returned him an Anſwer in theſe Terms:

"You

"You are very happy, Abagarus, thus to have believed in me without having ſeen me; for it is written of me, that they who ſhall ſee me will not believe in me; and that they who have never ſeen me, ſhall believe and be ſaved. As to the Deſire you expreſs of receiving a Viſit from me, I muſt tell you, that all Things for which I am come muſt be fulfilled in the Country where I am. When this is done, I muſt return to him who ſent me; and when I am departed hence, I will ſend one of my Diſciples to you, who ſhall cure you of the Diſeaſe which you complain of, and give Life to you and thoſe that are with you."

Euſebius ſays, in his Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, that he took theſe Letters out of the Records of Edeſſa; and he adds, that St. Thomas, after the Reſurrection of our Saviour, ſent Thaddeus, one of the ſeventy Diſciples, and very different from the Apoſtle of that Name, to preach Jeſus Chriſt in that City, and heal King Abagarus. Thaddeus went thither, converted the King and all his People, wrought an infinite number of Miracles among them, and recovered the King's Health. Some believe that beſides the Letter we have been ſpeaking of, our Saviour ſent his Picture to him printed on an Handkerchief. But the generality of Critics, particularly Father Alexander, Meſſ. Du Pin, and De Tillemont, reject this whole Story, and look upon the two Letters which we have mentioned as Pieces without any Authority.

King Abagarus, or Abgarus, according to D' Herbelot, was ſo called becauſe he was lame; we therefore ſhould not give him the Name of Agbar, as if it was derived from the Arabic Akbar, which ſignifies great. The City of Edeſſa, where he reigned, goes generally by the Name of Orfa in Diarbeck, a Province of Aſiatic Turky. It is a common Tradition among the Eaſtern People, both Chriſtians and Mahometans, that this Prince wrote a Letter to our Saviour, and received an Anſwer from him, together with a Handkerchief which had the Impreſſion of our Saviour's Face upon it. This we are told by Mr. D'Herbelot, in his Oriental Library: Which however does not deſtroy what we have ſaid of Abagarus; nor is it ſufficient to confirm the Authenticity and Truth of Abagarus's pretended Letter to Jeſus Chriſt, and our Saviour's Reply to Abagarus. The Eaſtern People are generally not very exact in Matters of Hiſtory; and their Traditions are not always to be depended upon. Edeſſa, which ſome have placed upon the Euphrates, was at the Diſtance of a Day's Journey from it. The River upon which it is ſituated is the Scyrtus, the Overflowings whereof are dangerous and frequent. In the Reign of the Emperor Juſtin, it was entirely ruined by Inundations. The Emperor built it again and gave it the Name of Juſtinopolis: But afterwards it was called Orfa. There were Kings of Edeſſa before the Reign of Auguſtus; and they generally bore the Name of Abagarus.

Mr. Vaillant has preſerved a Succeſſion of theſe Kings, who from the firſt Century were all Chriſtians.

It is ſomething ſurpriſing that they ſhould all go by the Name of Abagarus, which ſignifies, as Mr d' Herbelot ſays, lame. It is much more credible that they aſſumed the Name of Akbar, which ſignifies great; and that he who wrote to Jeſus Chriſt was nicknamed Abgar, inſtead of Akbar, by reaſon of his Infirmity; if however that Tradition of the eaſtern People be not an Impoſition upon us.

The many difficulties which are alledged by Mr. Baſnage, in his Continuation of Joſephus's Hiſtory, in order to deſtroy Euſebius's Story, and the Truth of our Saviour's Letter to Abagarus and that of Abagarus to our Saviour, are without doubt very ſolid. But ſhould they oblige us to reject both this Hiſtory and the Letters we are ſpeaking of, might it not be ſufficient to conclude from hence that the Truth of the Matter has been in ſome degree altered, and the Letters corrupted? To me it ſeems out of all Diſpute, that a certain King of Edeſſa was converted in the earlieſt Ages of Chriſtianity by one of the ſeventy Diſciples; and that after his Example the whole City embraced the ſame Faith. With regard to the Circumſtances, People, if they pleaſe, may look upon them as no more than Embelliſhments and popular Traditions ill put together: that the Letters as they are at preſent are Apocryphal and without Authority; but does it follow that there never were any genuine and authentic; and that the whole is only a Fraud invented with a Deſign to delude the World?

Procopius relates, in his Perſian War, that Abagarus, King of Edeſſa, who had contributed to the Defeat of Craſſus, was obliged to ſubmit to Auguſtus, who deprived him of the Title of King, and left him that only of Toparck, or Governor of the Place; and carried him to Rome, in order to ſecure himſelf of his Fidelity Abagarus, weary of abiding in this great City, bethought himſelf of a little Stratagem, by which to work upon Auguſtus, and prevail with him to grant Permiſſion for his return to Edeſſa. When he was a-hunting, he caught ſeveral wild Beaſts alive: and having directed ſome of the Earth to be taken up belonging to the Holes where each of them had been laid hold of, he appointed it to be ſpread ſeparately in different Places of the Amphitheatre. Upon letting looſe theſe Animals each went immediately towards the Earth belonging to his Den. The Emperor readily underſtood Abagarus's Meaning, and ſent him back to his little Kingdom. When he took his Leave, he deſired and obtained Permiſſion to build a Circus at Edeſſa. He died ſome few Years after, leaving a Son behind him very unworthy of him. The Son having uſed his Subjects ill, and fearing he ſhould be puniſhed for ſo doing by the Romans, went over to the Perſians, and embraced that Party.

This Account we have from Procopius, who affirms that the firſt Abagarus

garus was the ſame with him who wrote to Jeſus Chriſt; and that a ſecond was his Son; and both were Chriſtians. But this can never be made out; for Jeſus Chriſt did not begin to preach till the fourteenth Year of Tiberius, which is the 30th of the vulgar Æra, and above eighty Years after the Defeat of Craſſus: Nor could Abagarus believe in Chriſt till after the Preaching; nay, not till after the Death of our Saviour, which happened in the ſeventeenth Year of Tiberius. We have moreover ſome Medals ſtruck at Edeſſa, in which this Emperor is called the God of the Edeſſenians (Sebaſtos Theos toon Edeſſeoon.) They therefore were not at that Time converted to Chriſtianity.

According to Procopius's recital, it ſhould ſeem that the Prince who treated his Subjects ſo ill as to be obliged, fly for ſafety to the Perſians, was he who believed in Jeſus Chriſt, and brought over his whole People to the Faith. Euſebius places this Converſion in the Year 340, which anſwers to the twenty-ninth of Jeſus Chriſt, obſerving the Æra of the Edeſſenians; which is the ſame with that of the Seleucidæ, who began it at the Death of Alexander the Great. But in the twenty-ninth Year of our Saviour, Abagarus could not as yet have had any Knowledge of the bleſſed Jeſus, who did not enter upon the Buſineſs of preaching till the Year following. We had better read with Rufinus, the Year 343, which anſwers to the Year of Chriſt's Death, according to the vulgar Æra.

It is not known what Thaddeus did after his Time, becauſe he has not been well diſtinguiſhed from St. Jude. The Latins honour one St. Thaddeus on the eleventh of May, whom they ſeem to make a Martyr in Aſia: and the Greeks remember him on the twenty firſt of Auguſt. They ſay that he died in peace at Berytus, in Phœnicia, after baptizing many Perſons in that City.

Saint BARNABAS.

St. Barnabas was at firſt called Joſes, a ſofter Termination generally given by the Greeks to Joſeph. His Fellow-diſciples added the name of Barnabas, as ſignificant of ſome extraordinary Pro-Property in him. St. Luke interprets it, "the Son of Conſolation," which he was ever ready to adminiſter to the afflicted, both by Word and Action! as his comfortable Diſcourſes, his ſelling his own Eſtate, and collecting the Benevolence of others, for the Relief of the Poor indigent Chriſtians, abundantly teſtify. St. Jerom obſerves that his Name alſo denotes, "the Son of a Prophet;" and in this Reſpect likewiſe it was well ſuited to our Apoſtle, as being eminent for his prophetic Gifts and Endowments.

He was a Deſcendant of the Tribe of Levi, of a Family removed out of Judea, and ſettled in the Iſle of Cyprus, where they had purchaſed an Eſtate, as the Levites might do out of their Country. His Parents finding their Son of a promiſing Genius and Diſpoſition, placed him in one of the Schools of Jeruſalem, under the Tuition of Gamaliel, St. Paul's Maſter; an Accident which, in all Probability laid the firſt Foundation for that Intimacy which afterwards ſubſiſted between theſe two eminent Servants of the bleſſed Jeſus.

The Antients tell us, that St. Barnabas being a frequent Spectator of our Saviour's Miracles, particularly of his curing the Paralytic at the Pool of Betheſda, he became his conſtant Follower, and brought him to his Siſter Mary's Houſe, where he uſed afterwards to aſſemble with his Diſciples. They add, that his Son Mark was the young Man who bore the Pitcher of Water, and whom our Lord commanded his two Diſciples to follow Home, and there prepare for them to eat the Paſſover. However, Clemens Alexandrinus, Euſebius, Epiphanius, and other Ancients poſitively affirm, that he was one of the ſeventy Diſciples; and perhaps the Greeks may not be in the wrong, who ſay he was one of the firſt and chief of them.

The firſt mention we find of St. Barnabas in the holy Scripture is the Record

cord of that great and worthy Service he did the Church of Chriſt, by ſuccouring it with the Sale of his Patrimony in Cyprus, the whole Price of which he laid at the Apoſtle's Feet, to be put into the common Stock, and diſpoſed of as they ſhould think fit among the indigent Followers of the holy Jeſus. This worthy Example was followed by thoſe who were bleſſed with the Goods of Fortune; none kept their Plenty to themſelves, but turned their Houſes and Lands into Money, and devoted it to the common Uſe of the Church. St. Barnabas is indeed mentioned as ſelling the moſt valuable Eſtate on this Occaſion; or being the moſt forward and ready to begin a common Stock, and ſet others a laudable Pattern of Charity and Benevolence.

And now St. Barnabas became conſiderable in the Miniſtry and Government of the Church; for we find that St. Paul coming to Jeruſalem three Years after his Converſion, and not readily procuring Admittance into the Church, becauſe he had been ſo grievous a Perſecutor of it, and might ſtill be ſuſpected of a Deſign to betray it, he addreſſed himſelf to Barnabas as a leading Man among the Chriſtians, and one that had perſonal Knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James, and ſatisfied them of the Sincerity of his Converſion, and in what a miraculous Manner it was brought about. This Recommendation carried ſo much Weight with it, that Paul was not only received into the Communion of the Apoſtles, but taken into Peter's Houſe, "and abode with him fifteen Days," 1 Gal. i. 18.

About four or five Years after this, the agreeable News was brought to Jeruſalem, that ſeveral of their Body who had been driven out of Judea, by the Perſecutions raiſed about St. Stephen, had preached at Antioch with ſuch Succeſs, that a great Number, both of Jews and Proſelytes, embraced Chriſtianity; and were deſirous that ſome of the ſuperior Order would come down and confirm them. This Requeſt was immediately granted; and Barnabas was deputed to ſettle this new Plantation. Upon his arrival, he rejoiced extremely, to ſee what Progreſs the Goſpel had made among them; and earneſtly exhorted them to continue immoveable in their Profeſſion of Chriſt Jeſus. And being himſelf "a good Man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt, and of Faith," his charitable Deeds accompanying his Diſcourſes, and his pious Life exemplifying his ſound Doctrine, the People were greatly influenced by him, and very large Additions were made to the Chriſtian Church. But there being too large a Field for one Labourer, he went to fetch Saul from Tarſus, who came back with him to Antioch, and aſſiſted him a whole Year in eſtabliſhing that Church. Their Labours proſpered; their Aſſemblies were crouded, and the Diſciples, who before this were called among themſelves Brethren, Believers, Elect, and by their Enemies Nazarenes, and Galileans, were now called Chriſtians firſt in Antioch.

During

During the preaching of theſe Apoſtles in Antioch, Agabus, a Prophet, gave the Church Notice, that there would ſhortly be a great Famine throughout the World, or more properly throughout the Roman Empire, eſpecially in Judea. On hearing this Prophecy, the Chriſtians of Antioch conſidering the Number and Neceſſities of their Brethren at Jeruſalem, and how generouſly the rich among them had exhauſted their Eſtates in maintaining the Poor, determined to ſend them Aſſiſtance againſt the enſuing Scarcity; which they raiſed by Contributions according to every Man's Abilities, and ſent it to the Heads of the Church at Jeruſalem, by the Hands of Barnabas and Paul. This Famine lay heavy on Judea, during the four Year's Government of Caſpius Fadus, and Tiberius Alexander, Preſidents of that Province, under the Emperor Claudius.

When the Apoſtles had fulfilled their charitable Embaſſy, and ſtaid ſome time at Jeruſalem to ſee the good Effect of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whoſe Sirname was Mark, the Son of Mary, Siſter to Barnabas; and at whoſe Houſe the Diſciples found both ſecurity for their Perſons, and conveniency for the Solemnities of their Worſhip. But ſoon after the Apoſtles return to Antioch, an expreſs Revelation was made to the Church, by the Mouth of one of the Prophets who miniſtered there, that Barnabas and Saul ſhould be ſet apart for an extraordinary Work, unto which the Holy Ghoſt had appointed them. Upon this Declaration, the Church ſet apart a Day for a ſolemn Miſſion; and after devout Prayer and Faſting, they laid their Hands upon them, and ordained them to their Office; which was to travel over certain Countries, and preach the Goſpel to the Gentiles. From this joint Commiſſion, Barnabas obtained the Name of an Apoſtle, not only among later Writers of the Church, but with St. Paul himſelf, and with St. Luke, in the Hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles.

Paul and Barnabas being thus conſecrated the Apoſtles of the Gentiles, entered upon their Province, taking with them John-Mark for their Miniſter or Deacon, who aſſiſted them in many eccleſiaſtical Offices, particularly in taking care of the Poor.

The firſt City they viſited after their Departure from Antioch was Selucia, a City of Syria adjoining to the Sea; from whence they ſailed for the Iſland of Cyprus, the native Place of St. Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a Port formerly remarkable for its Trade. Here they boldly preached the Doctrines of the Goſpel, in the Synagogue of the Jews; and from thence travelled to Paphos, the Capital of the Iſland, and famous for a Temple dedicated to Venus, the titular Goddeſs of Cyprus. Here their Preaching was attended with remarkable Succeſs; Servius Paulus, the Proconſul, being, among others, converted to the Chriſtian Faith.

Leaving Cyprus, they croſſed the Sea to preach in Pamphylia, where their Deacon John, to the great Grief of his Uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned

returned to Jeruſalem; either tired with continual Travels, or diſcouraged at the unavoidable Dangers and Difficulties which Experience had ſufficiently informed him would conſtantly attend the Preachers of the Goſpel, from hardened Jews and idolatrous Gentiles.

The Apoſtles did not continue long at Perga, but travelled ſeventy or eighty Miles Northward to Antioch, in Piſidia, ſo called to diſtinguiſh it from Antioch in Syria, where the Apoſtles received their Ordination. Here they preached to the Jews in their Synagogue; but meeting with blaſphemous Oppoſition, they told them plainly, that they thought it reaſonable to preach the Goſpel firſt to them: but as they had ſo unthankfully rejected it, they would now make the ſame offers of Salvation to the Gentiles, according to the Commandment of God, by his Prophets. But the exaſperated Jews ſtirred up ſome of the principal Citizens to perſecute them, and force them to leave the City; whereupon they departed from Antioch, and came to Iconium, the Metropolis of Lycaonia, where they continued a conſiderable Time, preaching in the Synagogues with great Succeſs. But at laſt the old Spirit of Jewiſh Rage and Malice prevailed againſt them, and obliged them, in order to avoid the Madneſs of the Multitude, to retire to Lyſtra and Derbe Cities of the ſame Province.

Soon after their arrival at Lyſtra, Paul cured a Man who had been lame from his Mother's Womb, which ſo aſtoniſhed the Inhabitants, that they believed them to be Gods, who had viſited the World in the Form of Men. Barnabas they treated as Jupiter, their ſovereign Deity; either becauſe of his Age, or the gravity and comelineſs of his Perſon; for all the Writers of Antiquity repreſent him as a Perſon of a venerable Aſpect, and a majeſtic Preſence. But the Apoſtles, with the greateſt Humility, declared themſelves to be but Mortals: And the unconſtant Populace ſoon ſatisfied themſelves of the Truth of what they had aſſerted; for, at the Perſuaſions of their indefatigable Perſecutors, who followed them hither alſo, they made an Aſſault upon them, and ſtoned Paul, till they left him for dead. But, ſupported by an inviſible Power from on high, he ſoon recovered his Spirits and Strength; and the Apoſtles immediately departed for Derbe. Soon after their arrival, they again applied themſelves to the Work of the Miniſtry, and converted many to the Religion of the bleſſed Jeſus.

From Derbe they returned back to Lyſtra, Iconium, and Antioch, in Piſidia, "confirming the Souls of the Diſciples, and exhorting them to continue in the Faith; and that we muſt through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." After a ſhort ſtay, they again viſited the Churches of Pamphilia, Perga, and Attalia, where they took Ship and ſailed to Antioch in Syria, the Place from whence they firſt ſet out. Preſently after their arrival, they called the Church of this City together, and gave them an Account of their Travels, and the great Succeſs

Succeſs with which their preaching in the Gentile World had been attended.

But they had not long continued in this City, before their Aſſiſtance was required to compoſe a Difference in this Church, occaſioned by ſome of the Jewiſh Converts, who endeavoured to perſuade the Gentiles, that they were bound to obſerve the Law of Moſes, as well as that of Chriſt; and be circumciſed as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavoured to perſuade the Zealots from preſſing ſuch unneceſſary Obſervations; but all his Endeavours proving ineffectual, he was deputed with St. Paul and others to the Church at Jeruſalem, to ſubmit the Queſtion to be determined there in a full Aſſembly. During their Stay at Jeruſalem, Mark, in all Probability, reconciled himſelf to his Uncle Barnabas, and returned with him and St. Paul to Antioch, after they had ſucceeded in their Buſineſs at Jeruſalem, and obtained a Degree from the Synod there, that the Gentile Converts ſhould not have Circumciſion and other Moſaic Rites impoſed upon them.

This Determination greatly comforted and quieted the Minds of the Gentiles, but it did not prevent the bigotted Jews from keeping up a Separation from them; and that with ſo much obſtinacy, that when St. Peter ſome Time after came to Antioch, he, for Fear of offending them, contradicted his former Practice, and late Speech and Vote in the Synod of Jeruſalem, by refraining from all kind of Communion with the Gentiles: and Barnabas himſelf, ſo great and good a Man, was induced, by the Authority of his Example, to commit the ſame Error; though doubtleſs on being reproved by St. Paul, they both took more Courage, and walked according to the true Liberty and Freedom of the Goſpel.

Some Days after this laſt Occurrence, Paul made a Propoſal to Barnabas, that they ſhould repeat their late Travels among the Gentiles, and ſee how the Churches they had planted increaſed in their Numbers, and improved in the Doctrines they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the Motion; but deſired they might take with them his reconciled Nephew, John-Mark. This Paul abſolutely refuſed, becauſe in their former Voyage Mark had not ſhewn the Conſtancy of a faithful Miniſter of Chriſt, but conſulted his own Eaſe at a dangerous Juncture; departed from them without Leave at Pamphilia, and returned to Jeruſalem. Barnabas ſtill inſiſted on taking him; and the other continuing as reſolute to oppoſe it, a ſhort Debate aroſe, which terminated in a Rupture; whereby theſe two holy Men, who had for ſeveral Years been Companions in the Miniſtry, and with united Endeavours propagated the Goſpel of the Son of God, now took different Provinces. Barnabas with his Kinſman, ſailed to his own Country, Cyprus; and Paul, accompanied with Silas, travelled to the Churches of Syria and Cilicia.

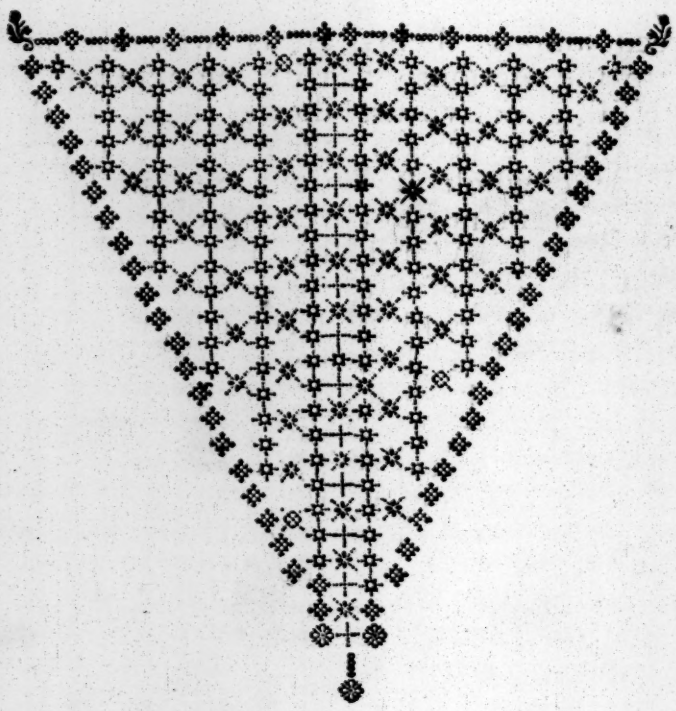
Tho' this Separation of the Apoſtles might ſeem to reflect on them, with Regard to the Government of their Paſſions, yet the Providence of God cauſed

cauſed this Separation to produce great Advantages to the Church. Their taking ſeveral Ways occaſioned the Goſpel to be preached in more Parts of the World than it otherwiſe would have been in the ſame Compaſs of Time. And the future Service of John-Mark, in the Miniſtry, proved ſo faithful and aſſiduous, that St. Paul was perfectly reconciled to him; highly recommended him to the Coloſſians, and afterwards during his Impriſonment at Rome, he deſired Timothy to bring Mark with him, as a very uſeful and worthy Perſon.

After this Separation from St. Paul, the ſacred Writers give us no Account of St. Barnabas; nor are the eccleſiaſtical Writers agreed among themſelves with Regard to the Actions of our Apoſtle after his ſailing for Cyprus. This however ſeems to be certain, that he did not ſpend the whole Remainder of his Life in that Iſland, but viſited different Parts of the World, preaching the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, healing the Sick, and working other Miracles among the Gentiles; and after long and painful Travels, attended with different Degrees of Succeſs in different Places, he returned to Cyprus, his native Country, where he ſuffered Martyrdom in the following Manner: Certain Jews coming from Syria to Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the Goſpel, were highly exaſperated at his extraordinary Succeſs, fell upon him as he was diſputing in the Synagogue, dragged him out, and after the moſt inhuman Tortures, ſtoned him to Death. His Kinſman, John-Mark, who was a Spectator of this barbarous Action, privately interred his Body in a Cave; where it remained till the Time of the Emperor Zeno, in the Year of Chriſt 415, when it was diſcovered, with St. Matthew's Goſpel in Hebrew, written with his own Hand, lying on his Breaſt.

There is an Epiſtle ſtill extant in Greek bearing this Apoſtle's Name. The Church has not received it into the Canon of Scripture, and for that Reaſon both Euſebius and St. Jerom call it apocryphal; but they do not deny sti being the Work of St. Barnabas. Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origin, often quote it as nis; and Monardus, who firſt publiſhed the Greek with the old Latin Verſion, ſufficiently ſhews, that it is the ſame known to the Ancients. becauſe all their Quotations are found in it. The Style of it reſembles that of the apoſtolic Age; but it appears to have been written ſome time after the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, a Period which St. Barnabas may eaſily be ſuppoſed to ſurvive. The Beginning of it is wanting, and the Inſcription, if it ever had any; but the Matter of it evidently ſhews, that it was written to ſuch Jews as are mentioned in the fifteenth Chapter of the Acts who having embraced Chriſtianity, ſtill held that the obſervanee of the Ceremonial Law was neceſſary to Salvation. But this Law St. Barnabas ſhews to be aboliſhed by the Goſpel; and that the Cuſtoms of it are of no Conſequence to the Chriſtians. The latter Part contains excellent Pre-

cepts, delivered under the Similitude of two Ways; the one of Light, the other of Darkneſs; the former under the Conduct of the Angels of God, the latter under the Influence of the Angels of Satan. The Way of Light is a Summary of what the Chriſtian is to do, that he may attain eternal Happineſs; and the Way of Darkneſs repreſents thoſe particular Sins and Vices, which exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven. He cloſes the whole with preſſing Chriſtians to live in ſuch a Manner, while they ſojourn in this Vale of Miſery, that they may enjoy the Pleaſures of the heavenly Canaan to all Eternity.



Saint

Saint PHILIP, the Deacon.

ST. Philip, one of the ſeven Deacons, choſen by the Apoſtles ſoon after our Saviour's Reſurrection, is ſuppoſed to have been a Native of Ceſarea in Galilee; it being certain that his Daughters lived in that City.

After the Death of St. Stephen, all the Chriſtians, except the Apoſtles, having left Jeruſalem, and diſperſed themſelves in ſeveral Parts, St. Stephen went down to preach the Goſpel at Samaria, where he wrought many Miracles, and converted great Numbers to the Faith. He alſo baptized them; but being only a Deacon, could not adminiſter the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He therefore informed the Apoſtles at Jeruſalem of his Succeſs in planting the Goſpel of the Son of God; deſiring they would come down, and lay their Hands on them, that they might receive the Holy Ghoſt. Accordingly Peter and John came thither, and the Samaritans received the Holy Ghoſt by their Means. Simon Magus had been admitted to Baptiſm, among others, by St. Philip; but St. Peter would not lay his Hands on him; and rejected, with contempt and execration, the Propoſal he made to him of purchaſing with Money the Power of communicating the Holy Ghoſt.

St. Philip was probably at Samaria when the Angel directed him to go towards the South, to the Road that leads from Jeruſalem to old Gaza, an ancient City in the Route to Egypt. Philip obeyed the Summons of the heavenly Meſſenger, and there met with an Ethiopian Eunuch belonging to Candace, Queen of Ethiopia; a Perſon highly eſteemed by his Miſtreſs, was entruſted with the Care of all her Revenues, and had been at Jeruſalem to worſhip the Almighty.

As ſoon as the Chariot of this Ethiopian appeared in the Sight of Philip, the Angel bade him advance towards the Stranger. He obeyed, and heard the Eunuch reading a Paſſage of the Prophet Iſaias; upon which Philip aſked him if he underſtood what he was reading? And the Eunuch anſwered, How ſhould I underſtand except ſome Perſon ſhould explain it to me? deſiring Philip, that he would come and ſit down by him in the Chariot. The Paſſage he read was this: "He

was led as a Sheep to the Slaughter: and as a Lamb before his Shearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his Mouth." Having finiſhed the Paſſage, the Eunuch deſired to know whom the Prophet intended. Is it, ſays he, himſelf the Prophet here means, or ſome other Man? In Anſwer to this queſtion, Philip began to inſtruct him concerning the Redeemer of the World, the Man Chriſt Jeſus. And having proceeded together for ſome Time, they came to a Fountain, when the Eunuch ſaid to Philip, here is Water, what hinders me from being baptized? Philip replied, That if he ſincerely believed with all his Heart, he would very readily perform the Ceremony. To which the Eunuch anſwered, I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God. He then commanded the Chariot to ſtop; and they both went down into the Water, where Philip baptized the Eunuch. The Ceremony being performed, and they come up out of the Water, the Spirit of the Lord took away Philip, and the Eunuch ſaw him no more; but Philip was found again at Azotus, and preached the Goſpel in all the Cities through which he paſſed, till he again arrived at Ceſarea, in Paleſtine, about thirty Leagues from Azotus.

The Eunuch, thus Baptized by Philip, is generally ſuppoſed to have been the firſt Apoſtle of the Ethiopians; and the Abyſſinians boaſt of having received the Chriſtian Faith from him. Some believe he preached the Religion of the Bleſſed Jeſus in Arabia Fœlix and Taprobana; but this is founded on a Suppoſition, that Queen Candace reigned in Arabia Fœlix. But the moſt prevailing Opinion is, that this Eunuch belonged to a Queen who reigned in the Peninſula Meroe, on the South of Egypt. The Throne of this Country was commonly filled by a Woman, and ſeveral of them were called Candace.

But to return to St. Philip. The ſacred Writers are ſilent with regard to the Actions of St. Philip, after the Time of his Baptizing the Ethiopian Eunuch: But the Greek Eccleſiaſtical Writers ſay, that he left Paleſtine and travelled to Tralles, in the Leſſer Aſia, where he founded a Church, of which he was both the Biſhop and Apoſtle; and where, after long labouring in the Vineyard of his Maſter, and working many Miracles, he ſlept in Peace, and was buried in the Church he had cauſed to be erected. The Latins ſay that he died in Peace at Ceſarea, where he was buried, together with his three Daughters, who died ſoon after him. But however this be, the Converter of the Samaritans, and the Baptizer of the Ethiopian Eunuch, cannot be ſuppoſed to have ſpent the remainder of his Days in Indolence: He doubtleſs preached the Goſpel of the Son of God, tho' the ancient Writers have not particularly enumerated the Places that received the Chriſtian Religion from his Mouth. Nor is this any Wonder, when it is conſidered that the firſt Profeſſors of the Goſpel, and who alone were Qualified for tranſmitting ſuch Accounts to us, were continually perſecuted, driven from one City to another, often obliged to hide themſelves in Dens and Caverns of the Earth, and generally

generally ſealed the Truth of the Religion they profeſſed with their own Blood. When all this, I ſay, is conſidered, we ſhall not be ſurpriſed at their having no Leiſure to writes hiſtorical Accounts of the Travels of the Apoſtles; or, if they did write them, that their Work were loſt in theſe Times of Confuſion.

Saint SILAS, or SYLVANUS.

SILAS, or Sylvanus was, according to St. Luke, a chief Man among the Brethren, an Expreſſion which indicates that he was one of the ſeventy Diſciples. But the firſt Account we have of him is in the Tranſaction relating to the Diſpute between the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Converts, with Regard to the neceſſity of keeping the Law of Moſes. when they choſe Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas, to go to Jeruſalem, to adviſe with the Apoſtles concerning this Queſtion. And this Silas is believed to be the ſame with him mentioned in the Title of the two Epiſtles of St. Paul to the Theſſalonians.

St. Peter ſent his firſt Epiſtle by him from Rome; wherein he ſtiles him a faithful Brother, and it is natural to think that he was one of thoſe who planted the Church in Antioch; becauſe we find him there at the Time of the famous Diſpute above mentioned, and choſen to be one of the Deputies to the apoſtolic College at Jeruſalem.

But however that be, when the Diſpute happened between Paul and Barnabas, which terminated in a Rupture, Silas joined himſelf to Paul, and became his Companion and Aſſiſtant in the great Work of preaching the Goſpel to the Gentiles. They firſt viſited the Churches of Syria and Silicia, from thence they paſſed into Lyconia, Phrygia, and Galatia; and laſtly, they croſſed the Sea, and came into Macedonia. The Reader will find in the Life of St. Paul a more particular Account of theſe Travels, the Dangers to which the Apoſtles were expoſed, and the Indignities and Perſecutions they ſuffered in preaching the glad Tidings of the Goſpel to the Children of Men.

While they were at Philippi, they found a young Woman poſſeſſed with an unclean Spirit, who followed them ſeveral Days, till Paul caſt out the evil Spirit and delivered her from ſo dreadful a Plague. This Action provoked the Maſters of the young Woman; for ſhe acquired conſiderable Gains by the Oracles and Predictions the Devil pronounced by making uſe of her Organs: they therefore ſeized upon Paul and Silas, dragged them before

before the Magiſtrates, and accuſed them of introducing Cuſtoms among them, contrary to thoſe of the Romans. This cauſed a great Uproar in the City, the People flocked together in a tumultuous Manner, and the Magiſtrates ordered that Paul and Silas ſhould be ſcourged, and committed to Priſon. But during the Night there was a great Earthquake; the Doors of the Priſon opened, and the Fetters of the Priſoners fell off without any human Aſſiſtance. The Goaler, on ſeeing the Priſon doors open, was going to put a Period to his Life, thinking his Priſoners had been fled; but Paul called to him, bidding him do himſelf no Harm, for all the Priſoners were ſafe. At this the Goaler recovered from his Terror, was converted to the Chriſtian Faith, and was baptized with his whole Family, as I have related more at large in the Life of St. Paul. In the Morning the Magiſtrates ſent Orders to ſet Paul and Silas at liberty; but Paul replied, that Roman Citizens were not to be treated in this Manner, and that the Magiſtrates might come themſelves and fetch them out of Priſon. From theſe Words of St. Paul it ſeems natural to think that Silas alſo was a Citizen of Rome. Perhaps he was, as well as St. Paul, a Native of Tarſus.

Leaving Philippi, they travelled to Theſſalonica and Berea, where they preached the Doctrines of the Goſpel; and Paul continuing his Journey to Athens, ſent Silas thither, though they did not meet till they both arrived at Corinth, where St. Paul wrote his two Epiſtles to the Theſſalonians.

After this we have no Account of Silas, whether he left St. Paul, and travelled into different Parts preaching the Goſpel, or whether he finiſhed his Courſe while he was a Companion of that great Apoſtle is uncertain; none of the Ancients having mentioned any farther Tranſactions of Silas, except Ædo, who ſays he died in Macedonia; and ſeems to hint that it was by Martyrdom.

Some are of Opinion, that Silas was one of the two Diſciples ſent by John to our Bleſſed Saviour, to aſk him that famous Queſtion, "Art thou he that ſhould come, or look we for another?" and that the Miracles he ſaw our Bleſſed Saviour perform, converted him, and he became his conſtant Follower.

Saint

Saint STEPHEN.

BOTH the Scriptures and the ancient Writers are ſilent with regard to the Birth, Country, and Parents of St. Stephen; and therefore we can only conjecture that he was one of thoſe Helleniſtical Jews that believed on Jeſus the Redeemer of Mankind. Epiphanius is of Opinion that he was one of the ſeventy Diſciples; but this is very uncertain. Our Bleſſed Saviour appointed his ſeventy Diſciples to teach the Doctrines, and preach the glad Tidings of the Goſpel; but it does not appear that St. Stephen and the ſix other firſt Deacons, had any particular Deſignation before they were choſen for the Service of the Tables; and therefore St. Stephen could not have been one of our Lord's Diſciples, though he might have often followed him and liſtened to his Diſcourſes.

The ſeven Deacons were choſen in the Year 53, and we find St. Stephen always placed at their Head, as the Chief and moſt Worthy; and it is generally believed, that he had been brought up at the Feet of Gamaliel. But whoever was his Maſter, he was remarkably zealous for the Cauſe of Religion, and full of the Holy Ghoſt; working many wonderful Miracles bebefore the People, and preſſing them with the greateſt Earneſtneſs to embrace the Doctrines of the Goſpel.

This highly provoked the Jews; and ſome of the Synagogue of the freed Men of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other Places, entered into diſpute with him; but being unable to reſiſt the Wiſdom and Spirit by which he ſpake, they ſuborned falſe Witneſſes againſt him, to teſtify that they heard him blaſpheme againſt Moſes and againſt God. Nor did they ſtop here: they ſtirred up the People by their Calumnies; ſo that they dragged him before the Council of the Nation, or great Sanhedrim, where they produced falſe Witneſſes againſt him, who depoſed that they had heard him ſpeak againſt the Temple, and againſt the Law, and affirm that Jeſus of Nazareth would deſtroy the holy Place, and aboliſh the Law of Moſes. Stephen, ſupported by his own Innocence and an inviſible Power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midſt of this Aſſembly, and his Countenance ſhining like that of an Angel; when the High-prieſt aſking him what he had to offer againſt the Accuſations laid to his Charge, he anſwered in the following Manner:

" Hearken unto me, ye Deſcendants of Jacob; the Almighty, whoſe Glory

is

is from Everlaſting, appeared to our Father Abraham, before he ſojourned in Charran, even while he dwelt in Meſopotamia, commanding him to leave his Country and Relations, and retire into a Land which he would ſhew him.

" Abraham obeyed the divine Mandate; he left the Land of the Chaldeans, and pitched his Tent in Charran; from whence, after his Father was dead, he removed into Canaan, even the Land you now inhabit; but he gave him no Inheritance in this Country, not even ſo much as to ſet his Foot upon. He promiſed indeed he would give it him for a poſſeſſion, which ſhould deſcend to his Poſterity, though at this Time he had no Child.

" God alſo indicated to him that his Seed ſhould ſojourn in a ſtrange Land; the People of which ſhould make them Bondmen, and treat them cruelly four hundred Years. After which, he would judge that Nation, bring out his People who ſhould ſerve them in this Place; as an earneſt of which, he gave him the Covenant of Circumciſion; and afterwards a Son, whom Abraham circumciſed the eighth Day, calling his Name Iſaac, who begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve Patriarchs.

" But theſe, moved with Envy, ſold their Brother Joſeph in Egypt, where the Almighty protected him, delivered him from all his Afflictions, indued him with Wiſdom, and gave him Favour in the ſight of Pharaoh, the Monarch of Egypt, who made him Governor both of his Houſe and Kingdom.

" Soon after this Exaltation of Joſeph, the Countries of Egypt and Canaan were afflicted with a terrible Famine and our Fathers found no Suſtenance either for themſelves or Flocks. But as ſoon as Jacob heard the welcome Tidings, that there was Corn in Egypt, he ſent our Fathers thither to purchaſe Bread for the Famine of his Houſehold. And in their ſecond Journey thither, Joſeph made himſelf known unto his Brethren, and alſo informed Pharaoh of his Country and Relations. After which, Joſeph's Father, with his whole Houſe, conſiſting of three ſcore and fifteen Souls, went down into Egypt, where both Jacob and our Fathers died, and were carried to Sychem, and depoſited in the Sepulchre purchaſed by Abraham of the Sons of Emmor, the Father of Sychem.

" But as the Time for fulfilling the Promiſe made to Abraham approached, the People multiplied in Egypt, till another King aroſe, who was not acquainted with the Merits of Joſeph, and the great Things he had done for that Country. This Prince uſed our Fathers with Cruelty, and artfully attempted to deſtroy all the Male Children. At this Time Moſes was born, and being exceeding Fair, was nouriſhed three Months in his Father's Houſe: but it being dangerous to conceal him there any longer, he was hid among the Flags on the Bank of the River; where the Daughter of Pharaoh found him, and educated him as her own Son.

" Thus

" Thus Moſes became acquainted with all the Learning of Egypt, and was Mighty both in Word and Deed; but when he was forty Years old he thought proper to viſit his Brethren, the Children of Iſrael. And ſeeing an Egyptian ſmiting an Hebrew, he aſſiſted the ſuffering Perſon. and ſlew the Egyptian; ſuppoſing that his Brethren would have been perſuaded that from his Hand, with the Aſſiſtance of the Almighty, they might expect Deliverance; but they conceived no hopes of this kind.

" The next Day he again viſited them; and ſeeing two of them ſtriving together, he endeavoured to make them Friends; Ye are Brethren, ſaid he to them, why do ye injure one another? But he who did his Neighbour wrong, inſtead of liſtening to his Advice, thruſt him away, ſaying, By what Authority art thou a Judge of our Actions? wilt thou kill me as thou didſt the Egyptian Yeſterday?

" Moſes, at this Anſwer fled from Egypt, and ſojourned in the Land of Median, where he begat two Sons. And at the End of forty Years, the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in the Wilderneſs of Mount Sinai, out of the midſt of a Buſh burning with Fire: a ſight which ſurpriſed Moſes; and as he drew near to view more attentively ſo uncommon a Sight, God called unto him, ſaying, " I am the God of thy Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob." At which Moſes trembled, and turned aſide his Face. But the Lord ſaid to him, " Put off thy Shoes from thy Feet, for the Place where thou ſtandeſt is holy Ground." I have long ſeen the Afflictions of my People which are in Egypt; I have heard their Cries, and am now deſcended from Heaven to deliver them. Come therefore, I will ſend thee into Egypt.

" Thus was that Moſes whom they refuſed, ſent by God to be a Ruler and Deliverer by the Hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the Buſh. Accordingly, he brought them out after he had ſhewed Signs and Wonders in the Land of Egypt, in the Red-ſea, and in the Wilderneſs, forty Years. It is this Moſes that told our Fathers, " A Prophet ſhall the Lord your God raiſe up unto you and your Brethren, like unto me; him ſhall ye hear.

" And this Prophet is the ſame who was in the Church in the Wilderneſs, with the Angel which ſpake unto Moſes in Mount Sinai, and with our Fathers: the ſame who received the lively Oracles to give unto us: he whom our Fathers would not obey, but thruſt him from them, and were deſirous of returning to their ſtate of Bondage; commanding Aaron to make them Gods to go before them; and pretending that they knew not what was become of Moſes, who delivered them from the ſlavery of Egypt. They now made a Calf, offered Sacrifices to it, and rejoiced in the Work of their own Hands. On which the Almighty abandoned them to Worſhip the Hoſt of Heaven, as

the Prophets have recorded. O ye Houſe of Iſrael! have you offered unto me ſlain Beaſts and Sacrifices, by the Space of forty Years in the Wilderneſs? Yea, ye took up the Tabernacle of Moloch, and the Star of your God Rempham, Figures which ye made to worſhip them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon."

"Our Fathers were poſſeſſed of the Tabernacle of Witneſs in the Wilderneſs; being made according to the Pattern Moſes had ſeen in the Mount. This Tabernacle our Fathers brought in with Jeſus into the Poſſeſſion of the Gentiles, who were driven out by the Almighty, till the Days of David, a Favourite of the Moſt High, and who was deſirous of finding a Tabernacle for the God of Jacob; but Solomon built him an Houſe."

"We muſt not however, think, that the Almighty will reſide in Temples made with Hands, as the Prophet beautifully obſerved, Heaven is my Throne, and Earth is my Foot-ſtool: what Houſe will ye build me, ſaith the Lord, or where is the Place of my Reſt? Hath not mine Hand made all theſe Things?

"Ye ſtiff-necked, ye uncircumciſed in Heart and Ears, ye will for ever reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt. Ye tread in the Paths of your Fathers, as they did, ſo do you ſtill continue to do. Did not your Fathers perſecute every one of the Prophets; did not they ſlay them who ſhewed the Coming of the Holy One, whom ye yourſelves have betrayed and murdered? Ye have received the Law by the Depoſition of Angels, but never kept it."

At theſe Words they were ſo highly enraged, that they all gnaſhed their Teeth againſt him. But Stephen lifting up his Eyes to Heaven, ſaw the Glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding at the right Hand of Omnipotence. Upon which, he ſaid to the Council, "I ſee the Heavens open, and the Son of Man ſtanding at the right Hand of God." This ſo greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one Voice, and ſtopped their Ears, as if they had heard ſome dreadful Blaſphemy; and falling upon him, they dragged him out of the City, and ſtoned him to Death. It was the Cuſtom of the Jews, on theſe Occaſions, for the Witneſſes to throw the firſt Stone. Whether they obſerved this particular at the Martyrdom of Stephen is uncertain: but the Evangeliſts tell us that the Witneſſes were principally concerned in this Action; for they ſtripped off their Cloathes, and laid them at the Feet of a young Man whoſe Name was Saul, then a violent Perſecutor of the Chriſtian Church, but afterwards one of the moſt zealous Preachers of the Goſpel.

Stephen, while they were mangling his Body with Stones, was praying to Omnipotence for their Pardon. "Lord, ſaid he, lay not this Sin to their Charge."

And then calling on his dear Redeemer to receive his Spirit, he yielded up his Soul. Some pious Perſons who, with the moſt piercing Grief beheld the Martyrdom of this good Man, took Care to bury his Remains; and the Church attended his Funeral with great Lamentations.

TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY was both a Convert and Diſciple of St. Paul. He was born according to ſome at Lyſtra; or, according to others, at Derbe. His Father was a Gentile, but his Mother a Jeweſs, whoſe Name was Eunice, and that of his Grandmother Lais.

Theſe particulars are taken Notice of, becauſe St. Paul commends their Piety, and the good Education which they had given Timothy. When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lyſtra about the Year of Chriſt 51 or 52, the Brethren gave a very advantageous Teſtimony of the Merit and good Diſpoſitions of Timothy; and the Apoſtle would have him along with him; but he circumciſed him at Lyſtra, before he received him into his Company. Timothy applied himſelf to labour with St. Paul in the Buſineſs of the Goſpel; and did him very important Services, through the whole Courſe of his preaching. 'Tis not known when he was made Biſhop; but it is believed that he received very early the Impoſition of the Apoſtle's Hand; and that in Conſequence of a particular Revelation, or Order from the Holy Ghoſt. St. Paul calls him not only his dearly beloved Son; but alſo his Brother, the Companion of his Labours, and a Man of God. He declared that there was none more united with him in Heart and Mind than Timothy.

This holy Diſciple accompanied St. Paul to Macedonia, to Philippi, to Theſſalonica, to Berea; and when the Apoſtle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas there to confirm the Converts. When he came to Athens, he ſent to Timothy to come thither to him. And when he was come, and had given him an Account of the Churches of Macedonia, St. Paul ſent him back to Theſſalonica, from whence he afterwards returned with Silas, and came to St. Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the Apoſtle mentions him with Silas, at the Beginning of the two Epiſtles, which he then wrote to the Theſſalonians.

Some Years after this, St. Paul ſent Timothy and Eraſtus into Macedonia; and gave Timothy orders to call at Corinth, to refreſh the Minds of the Corinthians, with Regard to the Truths which he had inculcated upon them. And ſome Time after, writing to the ſame Corinthians, he recommends to them to take Care of Timothy, and ſend him back in Peace, after which Timothy returned to St. Paul into Aſia, who there ſtaid for him. They went together into Macedonia: and the Apoſtle puts Timothy's Name with his own, before the ſecond Epiſtle to the Corinthians, which he wrote to them from Macedonia, about the middle of

the Year of Chriſt 57. And he ſends his Recommendations to the Romans in the Letter which he wrote them from Corinth the ſame Year.

Though it does not appear by the Acts, that Timothy was with St. Paul the two Years that he was Priſoner at Cæſarea, nor during his whole Voyage to Rome; yet as Timothy had accompanied him in his Journey to Jeruſalem, where he was apprehended, it is likely he followed him alſo to Cæſarea, and thence to Rome: and 'tis certain that he was in this latter City at the Time the Apoſtle wrote to the Philippians, the Coloſſians, and to Philemon; becauſe he is named jointly with him in the Titles of theſe three Epiſtles, which were written in the Years 60, 61, and 62. And the Year following, when St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, he tells them that Timothy was come out of Priſon; but he gives us no Circumſtances either of the Impriſonment or of the Delivery of this Diſciple.

When St. Paul returned from Rome, in 64, he left Timothy at Epheſus to take Care of that Church, of which he was the firſt Biſhop, as he is recognized by the Council of Chalcedon. St. Paul wrote to him from Macedonia, the firſt of the two Letters which are addreſſed to him. He recommends to him to be more moderate in his Auſterities, and to drink a little Wine, becauſe of the Weakneſs of his Stomach, and his frequent Infirmities. And after the Apoſtle came to Rome in the Year 65, being now very near his Death, he wrote to him his ſecond Letter, which is full of the Marks of his Kindneſs and Tenderneſs for this his dear Diſciple; and which is juſtly looked upon as the laſt Will of St. Paul. He deſires him to come to Rome to him before winter, and bring with him ſeveral Things which St. Paul had left at Troas. If Timothy went to Rome, as it is probable he did, he muſt be a Witneſs there of the Martyrdom of this Apoſtle in the Year of Chriſt 66.

He returned to Epheſus, probably in the Year 67, and continued to govern this Church as its Biſhop; for St. John the Evangeliſt, who was there at the ſame Time, had the Care of the Churches of all Aſia, by an Authority ſuperior to that of a Biſhop. The Acts of Timothy, of which Photius has tranſmitted an Abridgment to us, import, that on the twenty-ſecond of January of the Year 97, the Pagans of Epheſus made a great Feaſt, at which they carried in Proceſſion the Images of their Gods, being maſked and armed with Clubs; that Timothy ruſhed into the midſt of them to prevent the idolatrous Superſtition; but they killed him with Stones and with their Clubs. His Diſciples took him from them, and carried him upon a Mountain near the City, where he was buried. The Greeks aſſert, and ſome of the Latins, put this Feaſt on the ſame Day, namely, the 22d of January; but the venerable Bede, Raban, Adon and others, place it on the 24th of the ſame Month. The antient Martyrology, which bears the Name of Jerom, mentions him on the 27th of September.

If he did not die before the Year 97, we can hardly doubt but that he muſt be

be the Angel of the Church of Epheſus, to whom St. John writes in his Revelations: Though the Reproaches which the Holy Ghoſt make to him, &c. of having left his firſt Love, do not ſeem to agree to ſo holy a Man as Timothy was. Thus he ſpeaks to him: "I know thy Works, and thy Labour, and thy Patience, and how thou canſt not bear with them which are evil: And thou haſt tried them which ſay they are Apoſtles, and are not, and haſt found them Liars. And haſt borne and haſt Patience, and for my Name's Sake haſt laboured and haſt not fainted. Nevertheleſs, I have ſomewhat againſt thee; becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt Love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent and do thy firſt Works: Or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candleſtick out of his Place, except thou repent." The greateſt Part of Interpreters think, that theſe Reproaches do not ſo much concern the Perſon of Timothy, as that of ſome Member of his Church, whoſe Zeal was grown cool. But others are perſuaded, that they may even be applied to Timothy himſelf, who made ample Amends by the Martyrdom which he ſuffered, for what the Holy Ghoſt reproaches him with in this Place. We are not to think, that the Saints are here in an impeccable State, and that their Zeal never ſuffers any diminution. 'Tis thought that Timothy had Oneſimus for his Succeſſor.

T I T U S.

TITUS was a Gentile by Religion and Birth, but converted by St. Paul, who calls him his Son. St. Jerom ſays, that he was St. Paul's Interpreter; and that probably becauſe he might write what St. Paul dictated, or explained in Latin what this Apoſtle ſaid in Greek; or rendered into Greek what St. Paul ſaid in Hebrew or Syriac. St. Paul took him with him to Jeruſalem when he went thither in the Year 51 of the vulgar Æra, about deciding the Queſtion which was then ſtarted, whether the converted Gentiles ought to be made ſubject to the Ceremonies of the Law? Some would then have obliged him to circumciſe Titus; but neither he nor Titus would conſent to it. Titus was ſent by the ſame Apoſtle to Corinth, upon occaſion of ſome Diſputes which then divided the Church. He was very well received by the Corinthians, and very much ſatisfied with their ready Compliance: but would receive nothing from them, imitating thereby the Diſintereſtedneſs of his Maſter.

From thence he went to St. Paul into

into Macedonia, and give him an Account of the State of the Church at Corinth. A little while after the Apoſtle deſired him to return again to Corinth, to ſet things in Order againſt his Coming. Titus readily undertook this Journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him St. Paul's ſecond Letter to the Corinthians. Titus was made Biſhop of the Iſle of Crete, about the 63d Year of Chriſt, when St. Paul was obliged to quit this Iſland, in order to take care of the other Churches. The following Year he wrote to him to deſire, that as ſoon as he ſhould have ſent Tychicus or Artemas to him for ſupplying his Place in Crete, Titus would come to him to Nicopolis in Macedonia, or to Nicopolis in Epirus upon the Gulph of Ambracia, where the Apoſtle intended to paſs his Winter.

The Subject of this Epiſtle is to repreſent to Titus what are the Qualities that a Biſhop ſhould be endued with. As the principal Function which Titus was to exerciſe in the Iſle of Crete, was to ordain prieſts and Biſhops, it was highly incumbent on him to make a diſcreet Choice. The Apoſtle alſo gives him a Sketch of the Advice and Inſtructions which he was to propound to all Sorts of Perſons; to the Aged, both Men and Women; to young People of each Sex; to Slaves or Servants. He exhorts him to keep a ſtrict Authority over the Cretans; and to reprove them with ſeverity, as being a People addicted to Lying, Wickedneſs, Idleneſs, and Gluttony. And as many converted Jews were in the Church of Crete, he exhorts Titus to oppoſe their vain Traditions and Jewiſh Fables; and at the ſame Time to ſhew them, that the Obſervation of the legal Ceremonies is no longer neceſſary; that the Diſtinction of Meats is now aboliſhed; and that every Thing is pure and clean to thoſe that are ſo themſelves; he puts him in mind of exhorting the Faithful to be obedient to temporal Power; to avoid Diſputes, Quarrels, and Slander; to apply themſelves to honeſt Callings; and to ſhun the Company of an Heretick, after the firſt and ſecond Admonition.

The Epiſtle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the Church. The Marcionites did not receive it, nor did the Baſilidians, and ſome other Heretics; but Tatian, the Head of the Encratites, received it, and preferred it before all the reſt. It is not certainly known from what Place it was written, nor by whom it was ſent.

Titus was deputed to preach the Goſpel in Dalmatia; and he was ſtill there in the Year 65, when the Apoſtle wrote his ſecond Epiſtle to Timothy. He afterwards returned into Crete; from which it is ſaid, he propagated the Goſpel into the neighbouring Iſlands. He died at the Age of 94, and was buried in Crete. We are aſſured that the Cathedral of the City of Candia is dedicated to his Name; and that his Head is preſerved there entire. The Greeks keep his Feſtival on the 25th of Auguſt, and the Latins on the 4th of January.

APOLLOS.

APOLLOS.

WE have no Account in the antient Writers, either of the Birth or Family of Apollos; all they mention is, that he was a Jew of Alexandria, and came to Epheſus, during St. Paul's abſence, who was gone to Jeruſalem.

Apollos was remarkable for his Eloquence, and mighty in the Scriptures. He was inſtructed in the Way of the Lord; and as he ſpoke with Zeal and Fervour, taught diligently the Things relating to the Kingdom of Heaven, though he knew only the Baptiſm of John. He was therefore only a Catechumen, and did not as yet diſtinctly know the Myſteries of our holy Religion; but he knew that Jeſus Chriſt was the Meſſiah, and declared himſelf openly to be his Diſciple.

When therefore he was come to Epheſus, he began to ſpeak boldly in the Synagogue, and to ſhew that Jeſus was the Chriſt. Aquila and Priſcilla having heard him, took him home with them, inſtructed him more fully in the Ways of the Almighty, and baptized him, probably in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt.

Some Time after he was deſirous of travelling into Achaia; and the Brethren intreating him to undertake this Journey, they wrote to the Diſciples, deſiring them to receive him. Accordingly, he arrived at Corinth, and was there very uſeful in convincing the Jews out of the Scriptures, and demonſtrating to them that Jeſus was the Chriſt. Thus he watered what Paul had planted in this City. But the remarkable fondneſs of the Diſciples for his Perſon was like to have produced a Schiſm, ſome ſaying I am of Paul, others, I am of Apollos, and others, I am of Cephas.

But this Diviſion, which St. Paul mentions in his firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians, did not prevent St. Paul and Apollos from being cloſely united in the Bands of Charity. And as ſoon as Apollos heard that St. Paul was coming to Epheſus, he went thither to meet him, and was there when St. Paul wrote his firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians; wherein he teſtifies that he had earneſtly intreated Apollos to return to Corinth, though he had not hitherto been able to prevail with him; but nevertheleſs he gave him room to hope that he would go the firſt Opportunity.

St. Jerom ſays, that Apollos was ſo diſſatisfied with the Diviſion that happened on his Account at Corinth, that he retired into Crete, with Zenæ, a Doctor of the Law; and that this Diſturbance being appeaſed by St. Paul's Epiſtle, he returned to Corinth, and was conſecrated Biſhop of that City. The Greeks, in their Calendars, make him

him Biſhop of Duras; and in the Menæa, they tell us he was the ſecond Biſhop of Colophon in Aſia. Ferrarius ſays, he was Biſhop of Iconium in Phrygia; and others, that he was Biſhop of Cæſarea. But however this be, it is allowed by all, that he was an active and powerful Preacher of the Goſpel; and that great Numbers were, by his Preaching, rendered obedient to the Faith.

PRISCILLA.

PRISCILLA was very famous in the Church in the Times of the Apoſtles, and is often mentioned by the ſacred Writers before her Huſband Aquila. They were both Jews; but their Country and Births are uncertain. They were at Corinth when St. Paul came thither, and had the Happineſs of entertaining him in their Houſe a very conſiderable Time; the Apoſtle being of the ſame Trade with Aquila; namely, a Maker of Tents of Leather, for the Uſe of the Army, and at which they both wrought for ſome Time.

When St. Paul left Corinth, both Aquila and Priſcilla came with him to Epheſus; where they dwelt a conſiderable Time, and preached the Goſpel with good Succeſs. Their Houſe was ſo well regulated, that St. Paul calls it a Church; an Example that ſhould, in ſome Meaſure, be followed by every one who Pretends to be a Follower of the Bleſſed Jeſus, though ſhamefully neglected by the greateſt Part of Chriſtians.

From Epheſus they went to Rome, where they reſided when St. Paul wrote his Epiſtle to the Romans, in the Year of Chriſt 58; for he ſalutes them firſt of all, and with great Commendations. Some Time after they returned into Aſia; and St. Paul, Writing to Timothy, deſires him to ſalute them on his Account. It is thought they died here, and the Latin Martyrologies commemorate them on the eighth of July; but the Greeks celebrate the Feaſt of Aquila on the fourteenth of the ſame Month. Whether they died in Peace, or by the Hands of thoſe who oppoſed the Progreſs of the Chriſtian Faith, is not known; but however this be, they laboured faithfully to extend the Religion of Jeſus; and therefore have been juſtly placed among the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel.

ONESIMUS.

ONESIMUS.

ONESIMUS was a Native of Phrygia, and for many Years a Slave to Philemon, but was at laſt converted by St. Paul, in the following Manner: Oneſimus was a young Man whom his Companions had drawn into wicked Courſes. He refuſed to liſten to the Admonitions of his Maſter; on the contrary, he robbed him, and fled to Rome about the Year 61, while St. Paul was there in Priſon the firſt Time. As Oneſimus knew the Apoſtle by Reputation, his Maſter Philemon being a Chriſtian, he made it his Buſineſs to find him out: and being now ſorry for the Faults he had committed, confeſſed every Thing to St. Paul, and did him all the Service that even Philemon himſelf could have done, had he been at Rome. St. Paul ſoon brought him to a Senſe of his Crimes, prevailed on him to receive the Goſpel, inſtructed him, converted him, baptized him, and ſoon after ſent him back to his Maſter Philemon, with a Letter which we have ſtill among St. Paul's Epiſtles; and which is acknowledged as canonical by all the Chriſtian Churches.

It may paſs for a Maſter-piece of Eloquence in the perſuaſive Kind. There St. Paul has recourſe to all the Conſiderations that Friendſhip, Religion, Piety and Tenderneſs can inſpire, in Order to reconcile a Maſter to his Servant. He mingles even Prayers with Authority, and Praiſes with Recommendations; and he makes a parallel betwixt Oneſimus, become a Chriſtian and Child of God, with the ſame Oneſimus, an evil Servant and Fugitive. This Letter had all the good Succeſs he could deſire: Philemon not only received Oneſimus as a Faithful Servant, but rather as a Brother and a Friend. A little after he ſent him back to Rome to St. Paul, that he might continue to be ſerviceable to him in his Priſon. And after this we ſee that Oneſimus was employed to carry ſuch Epiſtles as the Apoſtle wrote at that Time. He carried that, for Example, which was written to the Coloſſians, while St. Paul was yet in Bonds, in the Year of Chriſt 62.

From this Time Oneſimus's whole Employment was in the Miniſtry of the Goſpel. The apoſtolical Conſtitutions acquaint us that St. Paul made him Biſhop of Berea, in Macedonia. The Martyrologies give him the Title of Apoſtle, and ſay that he ended his Life by Martyrdom. The Roman Martyrology mentions him as being made Biſhop of Epheſus by St. Paul, after Timothy: others had, that it was he whom Ignatius the Martyr ſpeaks, as being Biſhop of Epheſus in the Year of Chriſt 107; but this Opinion has no ſolid Proof to ſupport it. The ſame

Martyrology places his Feſtival upon the 16th of February; and ſays, that having ſucceeded Timothy in the Biſhoprick of Epheſus, and having been charged with the preaching of the Goſpel, he was taken into Cuſtody and ſent to Rome, where he was ſtoned for his Faith in Jeſus Chriſt. His Body was buried there; but was afterwards taken up and carried to the Place where he had been Biſhop. The Greeks celebrate his Feſtival on the 15th of December.

PHILEMON.

PHILEMON was a rich Citizen of Coloſſe, and probably a Native of that Place. He was converted, together with his Wife, to the Chriſtian Faith, by Epaphras, a Diſciple of St. Paul; for St. Paul himſelf never preached in Coloſſe.

Perhaps we had never heard of Philemon, had it not been on Account of his Slave Oneſimus, mentioned in the preceding Article; and who, after being converted by St. Paul, was ſent back to his Maſter with a Letter ſtill extant, which paſſes for a Maſter-piece in that Kind of Eloquence which is natural, lively, ſtrong, and pathetic; and which was peculiar to St. Paul.

Philemon had made a Church of his Houſe; and all his Domeſtics as well as himſelf were of the Houſhold of Faith. His Charity, Liberality, and Compaſſion, were a ſure Refuge to all who were in Diſtreſs: he followed the Example of that great Maſter in whom he believed; and was delighted when exerciſed in Works of Mercy and Beneficence.

The apoſtolic Conſtitutions ſay, that St. Paul conſtituted him Biſhop of Coloſſe; but the Menæa inſinuate that he went to Gaza, in Paleſtine, of which he was the Apoſtle and firſt Biſhop. From thence he returned to Coloſſe, where he ſuffered Martyrdom with Appia his Wife, in the Time of Nero. They relate ſeveral particulars of his Martyrdom; and ſay that his Body remained at Coloſſe, where it performed ſeveral Miracles. His Name is placed in the Martyrologies, on the 22d of November.

CLEOPAS.

CLEOPAS.

THE ancients Fathers who mention Cleopas tell us, that he was Brother to Joſeph, and both of them the Sons of Jacob. He was the Father of Simeon, Biſhop of Jeruſalem, of St. James the Leſs, of St. Jude, and of Joſeph, or Joſes. Cleopas married Mary, Siſter to the Bleſſed Virgin; ſo that he was Uncle to Jeſus Chriſt: and his Sons were Couſin-germans to our Saviour. Cleopas, his Wife, and Sons, were ſome of the faithful Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt; and of the Number who looked upon him as the Redeemer and Salvation of Iſrael. But Cleopas did not ſufficiently underſtand the Myſtery of the Croſs, and what Jeſus had ſo often told his Diſciples; that it was expedient he ſhould die and return to his Father. Cleopas having beheld our Saviour expire upon the Croſs, loſt all hopes of ſeeing the Kingdom of God eſtabliſhed by his Means upon Earth

He departed from Jeruſalem two Days after our Saviour's Death; that is to ſay, on the very Day of his Reſurrection: and as he was going to Emmaus with another Diſciple, while they were entertaining themſelves with what had paſſed during the Feaſt, particularly with Reſpect to Jeſus Chriſt, our Saviour joined them in the Form of a Traveller, aſked what they were diſcourſing upon, and encouraged them; convincing them from the Scriptures, that it was neceſſary Chriſt ſhould ſuffer Death. When they came near Emmaus, Jeſus made a ſhew as if he intended to go further; but Cleopas and his Companion detained him and made him ſup with them. Jeſus, while they were at Table, took Bread and bleſſed it; and having broken it, he preſented ſome of it to them. Hereupon their eyes were opened, and they knew him: but he diſappeared and left them.

They immediately returned to Jeruſalem, and ſought for the Diſciples, whom they found aſſembled together in the ſame Place. They related what had happened to them. The Apoſtles and Diſciples in their turn declared to them the Reaſon they had for believing Chriſt's Reſurrection; and how he had appeared to Peter. While they were yet talking, Jeſus appeared ſtanding in the midſt of them, tho' the Doors were ſhut. He ſaluted, bleſſed, and encouraged them, ſhewed them the Wounds in his Hands and Feet, eat in their preſence, expounded the Scriptures to them; and directed them to go and preach the Goſpel throughout the World.

We do not know particularly what were the Actions of St. Cleopas during the Remainder of his Life: but Uſuardus and Ado, tell us, that he

ſuffered Martyrdom; and was buried in the ſame Houſe where he had received Jeſus Chriſt at his Table. It is indeed the Opinion of St. Jerom, that Cleopas abode generally at Emmaus; and that it was in this Houſe that he invited our Saviour to continue with him. Some believe that afterwards a Church was built there. But ſuppoſing Cleopas to have been the Brother of Joſeph, and Father of St. James, St. Jude. Simon, and Joſes, it is more probable that he was a Galilean; and that his Habitation was in ſome City of Galilee. However this may be, the Latins honour Cleopas as a Saint upon the 25th of September. The Greeks make mention of him on the 13th of October, or rather on the 30th; and give him the Title of Apoſtle.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH, or Joſes, was the Son of Mary Cleopas, Brother to St. James the Leſs, and a near Relation to the bleſſed Jeſus, according to the Fleſh; being the Son of Mary, the holy Virgin's Siſter, and Cleopas, who was Joſeph's Brother, or Son to Joſeph himſelf, as ſeveral of the Ancients ſuppoſe; who have aſſerted that Joſeph was married to Mary Cleopas, or Eſcha, before he was married to the holy Virgin. Some believe Joſeph, the Son of Mary Cleopas, to be the ſame with Joſeph Barſabas, ſirnamed the Juſt, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apoſtles; and was propoſed with St. Matthias to fill up the Traitor Judas's Place; but in this there is no Certainty at all. We learn nothing particular in Scripture concerning Joſeph, the Brother of our Lord. If he was one of thoſe among his near Kinſmen who did not believe in him, when they would have perſuaded him to go to the Feaſt of Tabernacles, ſome Months before our Saviour's Death, it is probable that he was afterwards converted; for it is intimated in Scripture, that at laſt all our Saviour's Brethren believed in him: and St. Chryſoſtom ſays, that they were ſignalized for the Eminency of their Faith and Virtue.

JOSEPH

JOSEPH of ARIMATHEA.

JOSEPH of Arimathea, or of Ranatha, Rama, or Ramula, a City between Joppa and Jeruſalem, was a Jewiſh Senator, and privately a Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt: he was not conſenting to the Deſigns of the reſt of the Jews, particularly of the Members of the Sanhedrim, who condemned and put Jeſus Chriſt to Death: and when our Saviour was dead, he went boldly to Pilate, and deſired the Body of Jeſus in order to bury it. This he obtained; and accordingly he buried it after an honourable Manner in a Sepulchre newly made in a Garden; which was upon the ſame Mount Calvary where Jeſus had been crucified. After he had placed it there, he cloſed the Entrance of it with a Stone cut particularly for this Purpoſe, and which exactly filled the open Part of it.

The Greek Chuch keeps the Feſtival of Joſeph of Arimathea on the 31ſt of July. We do not meet with his Name in the Old Latin Martyrologies; nor was it inſerted in the Roman, till after the Year 1585. The Body of Joſeph of Arimathea was, they ſay, brought to the Abbey of Movenmontier, by Fortunatus, Archbiſhop of Grada; to which Charlemaine had given this Monaſtry under the Denomination of a Benefice. Here the Body of this Saint was honoured till the tenth Age: but then the Monaſtry being given to Canons, who continued ſeventy Years there, the Relicks of this Saint were carried away by ſome foreign Monks; and ſo loſt with many others. Not to ay any Thing of the Acts of Joſeph f Arimathea which are generally ſuppoſed to be ſpurious.

NICODEMUS.

NICODEMUS, one of the Diſciples of our bleſſed Saviour, was a Jew by Nation, and by Sect a Phariſee. The Goſpel calls him a Ruler of the Jews; and Chriſt gives him the Name of a Maſter of Iſrael. When our Saviour began to manifeſt himſelf by his Miracles at Jeruſalem, at the firſt Paſſover which he celebrated there after his Baptiſm, Nicodemus made no doubt but that he was the Meſſiah, and came to him by Night, that he might learn of him the Way to Salvation. Jeſus told him

him, that no one could ſee the Kingdom of Heaven, except he ſhould be born again. Nicodemus, taking this in the literal Senſe, made anſwer, How can a Man that is old be born again? can he enter a ſecond Time into his Mother's Womb? to which Jeſus replied, If a Man be not born again of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the Fleſh, is Fleſh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit. Nicodemus aſked him how can theſe Things be? Jeſus anſwered: "Art thou a Maſter of Iſrael, and ignorant of theſe Things? We tell you what we know, and you receive not our Teſtimony. If you believe not common Things, and which may be called earthly; how will you believe me if I ſpeak to you of heavenly Things? No Body has aſcended into Heaven, but the Son of God, who came down from thence. And juſt as Moſes lifted up the brazen Serpent in the Wilderneſs, ſo muſt the Son of Man be lifted up on high: for God has ſo loved the World that he has given his only Son; ſo that no Man who believes in him ſhall periſh, but ſhall have eternal Life."

After this Converſation, Nicodemus became a Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt; and there is no doubt to be made but he came to hear him, as often as our Saviour came to Jeruſalem. It happened on a Time, that the Prieſts and Phariſees had ſent Officers to ſeize Jeſus, who returned to them, and made this Report, That never Man ſpoke as he did: to which the Phariſees replied, "Are you alſo of his Diſciples? Is there any one of the Elders or Phariſees that have believed in him?" Then Nicodemus thought himſelf obliged to make anſwer, ſaying, Does the Law permit us to condemn any one before he is heard? To which they replied, Are you alſo a Galilean? Read the Scriptures, and you will find, that never any Prophet came out of Galilee. After this the Council was diſmiſſed. At laſt Nicodemus declared himſelf openly a Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt, when he came with Joſeph of Arimathea to pay the laſt Duties to the Body of Chriſt crucified; which they took down from the Croſs, embalmed and laid in the Sepulchre.

Nicodemus received Baptiſm from the Diſciples of Chriſt; but 'tis uncertain whether before or after his Paſſion. The Jews being informed of this, depoſed him from his Dignity of Senator, excommunicated, and drove him from Jeruſalem. 'Tis ſaid alſo, that they would have put him to Death; but that, in Conſideration of Gamaliel, who was his Uncle, or couſin-german, they contented themſelves with beating him almoſt to Death, and plundering his Goods. Gamaliel conveyed him to his Country Houſe, and provided him with what was neceſſary for his Support: and when he died, Gamaliel buried him honourably near St. Stephen. His Body was diſcovered in 415, together with thoſe of St Stephen and Gamaliel; and the Latin Church pays Honour to all three, on the Third of Auguſt.

An apochryphal Goſpel under the Name of Nicodemus is ſtill extant; which

which in ſome Manuſcripts bears the Title of the Acts of Pilate: but it is certain that this is not what the Ancients cite under the Name of the Acts of Pilate, which this laſt ſent to Tiberius; being only a modern Piece, full of Fables and Abſurdities, and deſerving no Regard to be paid it. At the End of this ſpurious Goſpel are read theſe Words, which are ſufficient to ſhew its Falſity: "In the Name of the holy Trinity here end the Acts of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; which were found at Jeruſalem by Theodoſius the Great, in the Pretorium of Pontius Pilate, in the public Acts which were written in the 19th Year of the Emperor Tiberius, and the 17th Year of Herod, Son of Herod, King of Galilee, the 8th Day, before the Kalends of April, &c. in the 202d Olympiad, under the Chief Prieſts, Joſeph and Caiphas; which was brought to the Form of a Hiſtory, by Nicodemus, and written in Hebrew after the Crucifixion and Paſſion of our Saviour.

NICHOLAS.

NICHOLAS was a Proſelyte at Antioch, and there converted from the Pagan to the Jewiſh Religion; but the Time of his Birth is uncertain. Afterwards he embraced Chriſtianity, and was one of the moſt zealous and moſt holy Men amongſt the firſt Chriſtians: ſo that he was choſen for one of the ſeven firſt Deacons of the Church of Jeruſalem. His Memory has been tarniſhed in the Church by a blemiſh from which it has not been poſſible to clear him hitherto. Certain Hereticks were called Nicholaites, from his Name: and though perhaps he had no Share in their Errors nor Irregularities; yet he is ſuſpected at leaſt to have given ſome handle to them. This is what the Ancients inform us in this Matter. He had a Wife who was very handſome; and in Imitation of thoſe who aimed at a great Degree of Perfection, he left her to live in a State of Continency. St. Epiphanius ſays, that he did not perſevere in this Reſolution; but took his Wife again: and, in order to juſtify his Conduct, he advanced principles contrary to Truth and Purity. He plunged himſelf into Irregularities, and gave beginning to the Sect of the Nicholaites, to that of the Gnoſticks, and to ſeveral others; who, following the Bent of their Paſſions, invented a thouſand different Sorts of Crimes and Enormities.

St. Epiphanius is ſupported in this by ſeveral ancient Fathers; of the Church as, Ireneus, Tertullian, Hyppolitus, Hilary, Gregory of Nyſſa, Philaſter of Breſſa, Jerom, Caſſian, Gregory the great, Pacian,

Pacian, Pope Gelaſius, Gilda, and alſo by many Moderns, who ſay that Nicholas the Deacon was Head and Author of the infamous and impious Sect of the Nicholaites.

But Clemens Alexandrinus, who was more ancient than Epiphanius, expreſſes great Eſteem for Nicholas; and relates the Affair quite otherwiſe. The Apoſtles, ſays he, having made ſome Reproaches to Nicholas, as being too jealous of his Wife, he cauſed her to come before them all; and declared that any one might eſpouſe her that pleaſed. This Declaration which he made in pure Simplicity, and without due Reflection, was only deſigned as a Proof of the little Attachment and Paſſion he had for his Wife: and in Reality, as St. Clement adds, I have been informed, he never cohabited with any other Women. And with Regard to his Son and his Daughters, who lived to a pretty old Age, they always remained in a State of perfect Virginity. But ſuch as were willing to uſe the Pretence of Nicholas's Authority, vindicated themſelves by what he had done, in Order to abandon themſelves to all Sorts of Irregularity.

Theſe Heretics, as the ſame Clemens reports, grounded themſelves upon a Word which Nicholas let drop, that the Fleſh ought to be abuſed. By which nothing elſe was meant but that we ought to ſuppreſs our Inclinations to Senſuality and Concupiſcence; and to mortify the Paſſions and Impetuoſity of the Fleſh. Whereas theſe Diſciples of Pleaſure explained the Words according to their own Senſuality, and not agreeable to the Meaning of this Apoſtolic Man. Euſebius having related, that the Nicholaites gloried in having Nicholas the Deacon, as the Author of their Sect, confutes them by adducing at length this Paſſage of Clemens. Theodoret does the ſame, and he declares ſtill more openly for the Sentiment of Clemens. For excuſing the Permiſſion of Nicholas, by which he allowed any one to marry his Wife, he ſays, that the Deacon had in Reality no Inclination to permit it; but only intended by this voluntary Offer to confute thoſe who had raiſed a Murmuring againſt him. St. Auſtin, Victorinus, Petavienſis, Iſidorus, and the Council of Tours alſo acquit Nicholas.

Caſſian ſays, that ſome diſtinguiſh Nicholas the Founder of the Sect of the Nicholaites, from the Perſon of the ſame Name, who was one of the firſt ſeven Deacons. Probably he would hint at the Author of the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions, who ſays, that the Nicholaites unjuſtly ſcreen themſelves under the Authority of Nicholas, one of the firſt Deacons. Jeſus Chriſt, in two Places of the Revelation of St. John, xi. ch. 5. 18. v. condemns the Actions and Doctrine of the Nicholaites. He ſays, he hates them: he makes it a Merit in the Biſhop of Epheſus, that he abhors them; and reproaches the Biſhop of Pergamus that ſome of his Church adhered to their Doctrines. In all theſe Paſſages St. John does not inſinuate the leaſt Thing that may ſeem to excuſe Nicholas; nor to clear him from the Accuſation

ſation of his being the Author of the Sect of Nicholaites: and beſides, we ſee that no Chriſtian Church has ever paid any Honour to the Memory of Nicholas, which is a great Circumſtance againſt him.

LUCIUS.

LUCIUS of Cyrene, mentioned in the thirteenth Chapter of the Acts, was one of the Prophets of the Chriſtian Church at Antioch. While he was employed in his Miniſtry with the other Prophets, the Holy Ghoſt ſaid to him, Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the Work whereunto I have called them; and after they had faſted and prayed, they laid their Hands upon them, and let them go. Some take Lucius to have been one of our Lord's ſeventy Diſciples. Uſuard and Ado aſſert, that the Apoſtle ordained him firſt Biſhop of Cyrene. The Latin Church honours him on the 6th Day of May.

The Perſon of the ſame Name mentioned in the ſixteenth Chapter of the Epiſtle to the Romans, and who is ſtyled St. Paul's Kinſman, is, as ſome ſay, the ſame with Lucius the Cyrenian; but the generality, with more Reaſon diſtinguiſh them; and it ſeems very credible that he and St. Luke are the ſame Perſon.

MANAEN.

MANAEN, or Manahem, a Chriſtian Prophet, and the foſter Brother of Herod Antipas, is mentioned in the 13th Chapter of the Acts, and 44th Year of Chriſt. He was at Antioch with the other Prophets, as Simon, ſirnamed Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Barnabas, and Saul, when the Holy Ghoſt ſaid to them, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the Work whereunto I have called them. Then after having faſted and prayed, they laid their Hands on them and let them go. 'Tis thought that Manaen was of the Number of the ſeventy Diſciples. The Authors of the Latin Martyrology put his Feaſt on the 24th of May, and ſay that he died at Antioch. We know no more of the particulars of his Life.

AGABUS.

AGABUS was a Prophet, and, as the Greeks ſay, one of the Seventy Diſciples of our Saviour. He foretold that there would be a great Famine over all the Earth: and St. Luke in the Acts informs us, that it accordingly happened under the Emperor Cladius in the fourth Year of his Reign, and forty-fourth Year of Jeſus Chriſt. Profane Hiſtorians take Notice of this Famine: and Suetonius obſerves, that the Emperor himſelf was inſulted upon this Occaſion, being attacked by the People in the middle of the Market-place, and obliged to retire to his Palace. As this Famine principally affected Judea, the Chriſtians of Antioch, upon Information of the great Want which their Brethren were reduced to at Jeruſalem, reſolved to ſend them ſome Relief. St. Paul and St. Barnabas were entruſted with this Charity, and conveyed it to Jeruſalem.

Ten Years after, namely, in the Year of Chriſt 58, as St. Paul was going to Jeruſalem, and had already landed at Ceſarea, in Paleſtine, the ſame Prophet Agabus, arrived there: and coming to viſit St. Paul and his Company, he took this Apoſtle's Girdle, and binding himſelf Hand and Foot, he ſaid, thus ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, So ſhall the Jews at Jeruſalem bind the Man that owneth the Girdle; and ſhall deliver him into the Hands of the Gentiles. And when they heard theſe Things, all they who were preſent beſought St. Paul to go no further; but he anſwered, that he was ready not to be bound only, but alſo to die at Jeruſalem, for the Name of the Lord Jeſus. Theſe are all the Particulars that we know of the Life of Agabus. The Greeks ſay, that he ſuffered Martyrdom at Antioch; and they obſerve his Feſtival on the 8th of March. The Latins, ever ſince the ninth Age have kept it on the 9th of February.

JOHN MARK.

JOHN MARK, Couſin to St. Barnabas, and a Diſciple of his, was the Son of a Chriſtian Woman, named Mary, who had a Houſe in Jeruſalem, where the Apoſtles and the Faithful generally uſed to meet. Here they were

were at Prayers in the Night, when St. Peter, who was delivered out of Priſon by an Angel, came and knocked at the Door: and in this Houſe the celebrated Church of Sion was ſaid to have been afterwards eſtabliſhed.

John Mark, whom ſome very improperly confound with the Evangeliſt St. Mark, adhered to St. Paul and St. Barnabas, and followed them in their return to Antioch: he continued in their Company and Service till they came to Perga, in Pamphylia: but then ſeeing that they were undertaking a longer Journey, he left them, and returned to Jeruſalem. This happened in the Year 45, of the common Æra.

Some Years after, that is to ſay in the Year 51, Paul and Barnabas preparing to return into Aſia, in order to viſit the Churches, which they had formed there, was of Opinion, that John Mark ſhould accompany them in this Journey; but St. Paul would not conſent to it: upon which Occaſion theſe two Apoſtles ſeparated. Paul went to Aſia, and Barnabas with John Mark, to the Iſle of Cyprus. What John Mark did after this Journey we do not know, till we find him at Rome in the Year 63, performing ſignal Services for St. Paul, during his Impriſonment.

The Apoſtle ſpeaks advantageouſly of him in his Epiſtle to the Coloſſians, "Marcus, Siſter's Son to Barnabas, ſaluteth you. If he cometh unto you, receive him." He makes mention of him again in his Epiſtle to Philemon, written in the Year 62, at which Time he was with St. Paul at Rome: But in the Year 65, he was with Timothy in Aſia. And St. Paul writing to Timothy, deſires him to bring Marcus to Rome; adding, that he was uſeful to him for the Miniſtry of the Goſpel.

In the Greek and Latin Churches, the Feſtival of John Mark is kept on the 27th of September. Some ſay that he was Biſhop of Biblis, in Phœnicia. The Greeks give him the Title of Apoſtle; and ſay that the Sick were cured by his Shadow only. It is very probable that he died at Epheſus, where his Tomb was very much celebrated and reſorted to. He is ſometimes called ſimply, John or Mark. The Year of his Death we are ſtrangers to; and ſhall not collect all that is ſaid of him in apocryphal and uncertain Authors.

EPAPHRAS.

EPAPHRAS was, as is generally believed, the firſt Biſhop of Coloſſe: He was converted by St. Paul, and very much contributed to the Converſion of his Fellow Citizens there. He came to Rome while St. Paul was in Bonds in that City; and was himſelf impriſoned with the ſame

Apoſtle, for the Cauſe of Chriſtianity. Having underſtood, that the falſe Apoſtle, taking the Advantage of his Abſence, had ſown Tares among the Wheat in his Church, he engaged St. Paul, whoſe Name and Authority were reverenced throughout all Phrygia, to ſend a Letter to the Coloſſians, in order to ſet them right in Matters wherein they were miſtaken; and to give them a true Knowledge of their falſe Teachers. St. Paul, with a View of ſupporting the Authority of Epaphras, and recommending his Merit to the Coloſſians, ſays, that he is his dear Fellow-ſervant, and a faithful Miniſter of Chriſt. The Feſtival of Epaphras is ſet down in the Kalendars on the nineteenth of July; and in them it is ſaid, that he ſuffered Martyrdom at Coloſſe.

EPAPHRODITUS.

EPAPHRODITUS, the Biſhop, or as St. Paul calls him, the Apoſtle of Philippi; or, if we underſtand the Word Apoſtulus in its literal Signification, the Meſſengers of the Philippians, as having been ſent A. C. 61. by the Faithful of this Church, to carry Money to the Apoſtle, who was then in Bonds, and in their Name to be ſerviceable to him with his Perſon. This Commiſſion he executed with abundance of Zeal, and expoſed himſelf to great Dangers; by which Means he brought upon himſelf an Indiſpoſition which reduced him to Extremity, and obliged him to remain a long Time at Rome. In the following Year, namely, the ſixty-ſecond of Jeſus Chriſt, he returned with all the haſte he could to Philippi; having had Intelligence that the Philippians, upon hearing of his Sickneſs, had been very much afflicted at it. St. Paul ſent a Letter by him to the Philippians, from which we learn all theſe Particulars.

The Greeks obſerve the Feſtival of Epaphroditus on the eighth or ninth of December, as well as on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of March, and ſtile him Apoſtle, one of the ſeventy Diſciples, and Biſhop of Adriaſa, or Andraca. From a Diſcourſe of which Metaphraſtes is ſaid to be the Author, we learn that St. Peter ordained one of this Name Biſhop of Terracina: but he does not tell us whether this be the ſame Epaphroditus mentioned by St. Paul. The Roman Kalendar ſets the Feſtival of Epaphroditus, Biſhop of Terracina, on the twenty-ſecond of March.

ERASTUS.

ERASTUS.

ERASTUS was a Native of Corinth, and Diſciple of St. Paul: he is called by this Apoſtle, Chamberlain of that City, where St. Paul then was; or of Jeruſalem, according to the modern Greeks. He adhered to the Apoſtle, and reſigned his Employment of Chamberlain. He followed him to Epheſus, where he was in the Year 56 of Jeſus Chriſt; and from whence St. Paul ſent him with Timotheus to Macedon, probably in order to prepare the Alms expected from the Faithful. They were both with him at Corinth in the Year 58, when he wrote his Epiſtle to the Romans, whom he ſalutes in both their Names; and it is likely that Eraſtus ever after followed St. Paul till this Apoſtle's laſt Voyage from Corinth in his way to Rome, where he ſuffered Martyrdom in the Year 65: for then Eraſtus remained at Corinth, as St. Paul in a little time after ſent Word to Timothy.

According to Uſuardus, Adlo, and the Roman Martyrology, St. Paul left Eraſtus in Macedonia, and made him Biſhop of it; and at laſt ſuffered Martyrdom at Philippi. The Greeks, on the contrary, in their Kalendars make him Biſhop of Paneas, near the Source of the River Jordan, ſtyle him Apoſtle, place him in the Number of the ſeventy Diſciples; and ſay he died in Peace, after having travelled over all the Earth, preaching the Faith of Chriſt. But none of theſe produce any Proof of what they ſay. The Latins keep his Feſtival on the twenty-ſixth of July, and the Greeks on the tenth of November.

ANANIAS.

ANANIAS was a Diſciple of the Bleſſed Jeſus: he dwelt at Damaſcus, when he was directed in a Viſion from the Lord to go and find Paul, who had been lately converted, and was come to that City. Ananias anſwered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this Man, how much evil he hath done

done to thy Saints at Jeruſalem; and how he hath Authority from the Chief Prieſts to bind all that call upon thy Name." But the Lord ſaid unto him, "Go thy Way; for he is a choſen Veſſel unto me, to declare my Name before the Gentiles and Kings, and the Children of Iſrael; for I will ſhew him how great Things he muſt ſuffer for my Name's ſake." Ananias went therefore to the Houſe where God had revealed to him that Paul was; and putting his Hands on him, ſaid, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jeſus, who appeared unto thee in the Way, hath ſent me that thou mighteſt receive thy Sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghoſt. And immediately there fell from his Eyes as it had been Scales; and he received Sight forth-with, and aroſe and was baptized." We know no other Circumſtances of Ananias's Life beſides this juſt related. The Book of apoſtolical Conſtitutions takes him to be a Layman. Acumenius, and ſome Moderns, think he was a Deacon. St. Auſtin will have it that he was a Prieſt, becauſe it is ſaid that St. Paul was ſent to him, that he might receive the Sacrament; the Adminiſtration of which was left by Chriſt himſelf to the Prieſthood of his Church. The modern Greeks maintain that he was one of the ſeventy Diſciples, and made Biſhop of Damaſcus? and that having obtained the Crown of Martyrdom, he was buried in the ſame City: and here a fine Church is to be ſeen in the Place where he was interred. The Turks, who have converted it into a Moſque, ſtill preſerve a great Veneration for his Monument. The Greeks keep his Feſtival on the firſt Day of October, and the Latins on the twenty-fifth of January.

C L E M E N T.

CLEMENT is mentioned by St. Paul, in his Epiſtle to the Philippians, where the Apoſtle ſays that Clement's Name is written in the Book of Life. The generality of the Fathers, and other Interpreters, make no Queſtion but that this is the ſame Clement who ſucceeded St. Peter after Linus and Cletus, in the Government of the Church of Rome; and this ſeems to be intimated, when in the Office for St. Clement's Day, that Church appoints this Part of the Epiſtle to the Philippians to be read. On the contrary, Grotius is of Opinion, that the Clement St Paul ſpeaks of was no more than a Prieſt of the Church of Philippi

We find ſeveral Things relating to Clement's Life in the Recognitions and Conſtitutions

Conſtitutions called Apoſtolical but as theſe Works are not looked upon as authentic, tho' there may be Truths in them derived from the Tradition of the firſt Ages, little Streſs is to be laid upon their Teſtimony. St. Chryſoſtom thinks, that Clement, mentioned by St. Paul in his Epiſtle to the Philippians, was one of the Apoſtle's conſtant Fellow-travellers. Irenæus, Origin, Clemens of Alexandria, and others of the Ancients aſſert, that Clement was a Diſciple of the Apoſtles; that he had ſeen them and heard their Inſtructions. St. Epiphanius, Jerom, Rufinus, Bede, and ſome others, were of Opinion, that as the Apoſtles St. Peter and St. Paul could not be continually at Rome, by Reaſon of the frequent Journies which they were obliged to make to other Places, and it was not proper that the City of Rome ſhould be without a Biſhop, there was a neceſſity to ſupply the want of them by eſtabliſhing Linus, Anaclet, and Clement there. The Conſtitutions inform us, that Linus was ordained by St. Paul; Tertullian and Epiphanius ſay, that St. Peter ordained Clement. Rufinus tells us, that this Apoſtle choſe St. Clement for his Succeſſor. But Epiphanius believes, that after he had been made Biſhop of Rome by St. Peter, he refuſed to exerciſe this Office, till after the Death of Linus and Anaclet, he was obliged to take upon him the Care of the Church; and this is the moſt generally received Opinion. St. Peter's immediate Succeſſor was Linus; Linus was ſucceeded by Anacletus; and Anacletus by Clement, in the Year of Chriſt ninety-one, which was the tenth of Domitian's Reign.

During his Pontificate, the Church of Corinth having been diſturbed by a Spirit of Diviſion, St. Clement wrote a large Letter to the Corinthians, which is ſtill extant, and was ſo much eſteemed by the Ancients, that they read it publickly in many Churches: And ſome have been inclined to range it among the Canonical Writings. The Emperor Domitian intending to declare War againſt the Church of Jeſus Chriſt, a Revelation of his Deſign was made to Hermas, and he ordered to give a Copy of it to Pope Clement, that he might communicate it to other Churches, and exhort them to provide againſt the Storm. We have no certain Accounts of what happened to St. Clement during this Perſecution; but we are very well aſſured that he lived to the third Year of Trajan; which is the Hundredth of Jeſus Chriſt. His Feſtival is ſet down by Bede, and all the Latin Martyrologies, on the twenty-third of November. The Greeks honour him on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of the ſame Month. Rufinus, and Pope Zozimus, give him the Title of Martyr; and the Roman Church in its Canon places him among the Saints who have ſacrificed their Lives for Jeſus Chriſt. We read in an ancient Hiſtory, to the Authenticity of which however there are ſome exceptions, that St. Clement was baniſhed by Trajan, to the Cherſoneſus, beyond the Euxine Sea: beſides other Particulars in the Hiſtory, which we ſhall not mention, as having too much the air of Fable.

GAIUS.

G A I U S.

GAIUS was one of St. Paul's Diſciples, and mention is made of him in the Acts of the Apoſtles. He was probably a Macedonian; but was ſettled at Corinth, where he had the Honour to lodge St. Paul during his abode there. When the Apoſtle went into Aſia, Gaius and Ariſtarchus accompanied him as far as Epheſus, where they abode for ſome Time with St. Paul. So that in the Sedition raiſed in this City about Diana of Epheſus, the Epheſians ran in great Numbers to the Houſe of Gaius and Ariſtarchus, and dragged them to the Theatre. St. Paul himſelf was deſirous of going thither; but was prevented by his Friends. However, no Harm happened either to Gaius or Ariſtarchus, becauſe the Commotion was appeaſed by the Prudence of the Town Clerk. Origen ſpeaks of one Gaius, St. Paul's Diſciple, who was ſaid to have been made Biſhop of Theſſalonica.

A R I S T A R C H U S.

ARISTARCHUS was another of St. Paul's Diſciples, who has mentioned him in his Epiſtles to the Coloſſians and Philemon: He is alſo often mentioned in the Acts of the Apoſtles. He was a Macedonian, and a Native of Theſſalonica. He accompanied St. Paul to Epheſus; and continued with him during the two Years of his abode there, partaking with him in all the Dangers and Labours of the Apoſtleſhip. He was very near being killed in a Tumult raiſed by the Epheſian Goldſmiths. He left this City with the Apoſtle, and went with him into Greece: From thence he followed him into Aſia; from Aſia into Judea; and from Judea to Rome. Ado, and the Roman Matyrology, make him Biſhop of Theſſalonica: But the Greeks ſay he was Biſhop of Apamea, in Syria, and was beheaded with St. Paul, at Rome, in the Reign of Nero; continuing to the very laſt inviolably attached to the Apoſtle.

DEMAS.

D E M A S.

DEMAS is mentioned by St. Paul in the fourth Chapter of the Coloſſians, as a Native of Theſſalonica. At firſt he was one of the moſt zealous Diſciples which this Apoſtle had, and was very ſerviceable to him at Rome, during his Impriſonment there; but ſome Years after, about the Year of Chriſt ſixty-five, he forſook St. Paul, in order to follow a more ſecular Life, and withdrew to Theſſalonica, the Place of his Birth. Epiphanius informs us, that he renounced the Faith, and was engaged in the Hereſy of Cerinthius, Ebion, and others, who held Jeſus Chriſt to be a mere Man. Dorotheus, in his Synopſis, ſays, That when he came to Theſſalonica, he became a Prieſt to ſome of the Idols of the Country: But others affirm, that he recovered after this fall, and ſuffered Martyrdom.

S O S I P A T E R.

SOSIPATER, of whom St. Paul ſpeaks in the ſixteenth Chapter of the Romans, was his Kinſman, as ſome think, Lucius, and Jaſon, and Soſipater my Kinſmen ſalute you. However in this is ſome Difficulty, ſince Jaſon was of Theſſalonica, and Soſipater of Berea in Macedonia; therefore very diſtant from Tarſus, the Country of St. Paul. Origen believes they were originally Gentiles; which is another reaſon for thinking that they were not the Apoſtle's Kinſmen. But in what Senſe then does he call them his Kinſmen? Is it becauſe they were of the ſame Nation, of the ſame Tribe, of the ſame City, of the ſame Religion? or that they were only allied to him? This is what can be determined only at random. I even think that it may be confidently aſſerted, that this Soſipater, who was at Rome in the 58th Year of Chriſt, when St. Paul wrote his Epiſtle to the Romans, cannot be the Soſipater of Berea; ſince he accompanied St. Paul in the ſame Year 58, in his Journey to Jeruſalem: And who probably went with him from Corinth, whence the Epiſtle to the Romans was written to go by the way of Macedonia to Jeruſalem; as may be ſeen in the 20th Chapter of the Acts.

What we know of Soſipater is, that he was of Berea, as has been ſaid: And it is very likely St. Paul converted him in the 52d Year of the Vulgar Æra, when he viſited that City. The Latin Text of the Acts, and ſome Greek Manuſcripts, call him Pyrrhus. When St. Paul departed from Corinth, in order to go to Jeruſalem, in the 58th Year of the Vulgar Æra, he was accompanied by Soſipater, Ariſtarchus, and ſome other Diſciples. They came with him as far as Philippi; whence St. Paul ſent them before him to Troas, where they ſtayed for him: So that he could not be at the ſame Time at Rome, as has been obſerved. After this Time we know not what became of Soſipater. But the Latins make his Feaſt on the 25th of June, and call him a Diſciple of St. Paul. The Greeks honour him upon the 28th or 29th of April. They join him with Jaſon, and call him a Kinſman of St. Paul. And thus they confound Soſipater of Berea with him of Rome.

PHEBE.

PHEBE, a Deaconeſs of the Port of Corinth called Cenchrea. St. Paul had a particular Eſteem for this holy Woman; and Theodoret thinks, that the Apoſtle lodged at her Houſe for ſome Time, while he continued in or near Corinth. In the 16th Chapter of the Romans, St. Paul ſays, "I commend unto you Phebe our Siſter, which is a Servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh Saints: and that ye aſſiſt her in whatever Buſineſs ſhe hath need of you: For ſhe hath been a Succourer of many, and of myſelf alſo." Some Moderns have advanced a Notion, that Phebe was Wife to St. Paul; but none of the Ancients have ſaid any Thing like it. It is thought that, in Quality of Deaconneſs, ſhe was employed by the Church in ſome Miniſtrations ſuitable to her Sex and Condition; ſuch as viſiting and inſtructing the Chriſtian Women, attending them in their Sickneſſes, diſtributing Alms to them. The Martyrologies mention Phebe's Feſtival on the Third of September.

STEPHANUS.

STEPHANUS, the Name of one of the principal Chriſtians of Corinth, whom St. Paul baptized with all his Family, as we find in the firſt Chapter of the Epiſtle to the Corinthians; and this probably happened about the

52d

52d Year of Chriſt, or of the vulgar Æra. Stephanus devoted himſelf to the Service of the Church; and, in the Year of our Saviour 56, he came to St. Paul at Epheſus, and, according to St. Chryſoſtom, brought him Letters which the Church of Corinth wrote to him, in order to conſult him concerning Marriage, Continency, and perhaps other Subjects, which St. Paul treats of in the ſaid firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians. This the Apoſtle wrote from Epheſus in the 56th Year; and it was ſent by Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus.

ONESIPHORUS.

ONESIPHORUS was a Diſciple of St. Paul, and mentioned by him in the firſt Chapter of his ſecond Epiſtle to Timothy. He came to Rome in the Year of Chriſt 65, while the Apoſtle was in Priſon for the Faith, and at a Time when almoſt every one had forſaken him. At this City he arrived from Aſia, where he had already been very ſerviceable to the Church; and having found St. Paul in Bonds, after he had ſought him out for a long Time, he often aſſiſted him to the utmoſt of his Power. For which Reaſon the Apoſtle wiſhes all Sort of Benedictions both on himſelf and his Family. The Greeks place his Feſtival on the 29th of April and the 8th of December. On the former Day they make him Biſhop of Colophon in Aſia, and on the latter Biſhop of Ceſarea, without diſtinguiſhing which they mean. They Rank him in the Order of the ſeventy Diſciples; and ſeem to aſcribe Martyrdom to him. The Roman Martyrology on the 16th of December ſays, that he ſuffered Martyrdom on the Helleſpont, whither he went to preach the Goſpel along with Porphyrius: that having been apprehended by the Command of the Proconſul Adrian, and carried into a Temple dedicated to Idols, there to offer Incenſe, upon courageouſly refuſing to do it, he was cruelly whipped with Rods, and then tied to a horſe's Tail, and drawn about till he expired.

L I N U S.

LINUS was alſo a Diſciple of St. Paul, who mentions him in the firſt Chapter of his ſecond Epiſtle to Timothy, "Linus and Claudia and all the Brethren greet ye." He was, as ſome ſay, the Son of Claudia ſpoken of in the ſame Verſe. St. Irenæus, Euſebius, Optatus, Epiphanius, St. Jerom, and Theodoret, affirm that Linus ſucceeded immediately to St. Peter in the ſee of Rome. He governed for twelve Years and ſome Months. The Book of apoſtolical Conſtitutions ſay, that Linus was ordained Biſhop of Rome by St. Paul, long before the Death of St. Peter. Rufinus aſſerts, that Linus and Anacletus governed the Church of Rome, whilſt the Apoſtles St. Peter and St. Paul were living, but in their Abſence, St. Peter, a little before his Death, choſe Clement at laſt to ſucceed him in the ſee of Rome. And Epiphanius will have it, that Clement, out of Modeſty, refuſed to exerciſe his Office, till after the Death of Linus and Cletus. The Deſtruction of Jeruſalem happened during his Pontificate, in the Year of Chriſt 70. The Greeks keep his Feſtival on the fifth of November, and the Latins on the 23d of September.

T E R T I U S.

TERTIUS was St. Paul's Amanuenſis, when he wrote his Epiſtle to the Romans in the Year of Chriſt 58, as appears in the ſixteenth Chapter, "I, Tertius, who wrote this Epiſtle, ſalute you in the Lord." Some think that Tertius copied this Letter from the original written by St. Paul's own Hand. Lightfoot conjectures that Tertius is the ſame as Silas, who accompanied St. Paul in part of his Journeys; Silas in Hebrew, ſignifying the ſame as Tertius in Latin. Some Greek editions, inſtead of Tertius, read Tirentius. The Greeks keep his Feſtival on the tenth of November, and give him great commendations: and they make him Succeſſor to Soſipater, in the Biſhoprick of Iconium.

TYCHICUS.

TYCHICUS.

TYCHICUS was a Diſciple of St. Paul, whom the Apoſtle often made uſe of for carrying his Letters to the ſeveral Churches. He was of the Province of Aſia, and accompanied St. Paul, when, in the Year 58, he made his Journey from Corinth to Jeruſalem. It was he who carried the Epiſtle to the Coloſſians, written in the Year 61; and that to the Epheſians, written in 65; and the firſt to Timothy, written in 64. St. Paul did not ſend him merely to carry his Letters; but alſo to learn the State of the Churches, and to bring him an Account of them: wherefore he calls him his dear Brother, a faithful Miniſter of the Lord, and his Companion in the Service of God. He had thoughts alſo of ſending him into Crete, to preſide over that Church in the abſence of Titus. 'Tis believed likewiſe, that he was deputed to Epheſus, to govern that Church, while Timothy ſhould be at Rome; at which Time he carried Letters from this Apoſtle to the Epheſians. The Greeks celebrate the Feſtival of Tychicus on the eighth or ninth of December; and give him the Title of one of the ſeventy Diſciples, and Biſhop of Colophon, in the Province of Aſia. Uſuard, Ado, and the other Martyrologiſts, mark his Feſtival at Paphos, in Cyprus, on the nineteenth of April. And Uſuard only gives him the Title of Deacon.

TROPHIMUS.

TROPHIMUS was a Diſciple of St. Paul, who was a Gentile by Religion, and an Epheſian by Birth. After St. Paul had converted him, he conſtantly adhered to him, nor quitted him ever after. He came with the Apoſtle from Epheſus to Corinth, and kept him Company in his whole Journey from Corinth to Jeruſalem, in the Year of our Lord 58. When St. Paul was in the Temple there, the Jews laid hold of him, Crying out, "Men of Iſrael, Help: This is the Man that teacheth all Men every where againſt the People, and the Law of this Place: And farther, brought Greeks alſo into the Temple;

Temple; and hath polluted this holy Place." And this they ſaid, becauſe certain Jews of Epheſus having ſeen Trophimus with St. Paul in the City, whom they looked upon as a Gentile, imagined that St. Paul had introduced him into the Temple. The whole City was immediately in an Uproar; and St. Paul was ſecured. It is very probable that Trophimus followed the Apoſtle to Rome. and forſook him not in his Bonds. It is pretended, that after St. Paul had obtained his Liberty, in the Year 63, he went into Spain; and that paſſing through the Country of the Gauls, he left Trophimus at Arles, as Biſhop there, and according to Baronius, in the Year 62. But this is very difficult to reconcile with what St. Paul writes to Timothy in the fourth Chapter of the ſecond Epiſtle, that he had left Trophimus ſick at Miletus. Trophimus muſt neceſſarily have gone back into Aſia, about a Year after St. Paul had left him at Arles. The Greeks keep the fourteenth of April in Honour of Trophimus; and ſay he was beheaded by the Command of Nero, together with St. Paul. Thoſe of Arles keep his Feſtival on the twenty-ninth of December.

The VIRGIN MARY.

AS we are taught by the Predictions of the Prophets, that a Virgin was to be the Mother of the promiſed Meſſiah, ſo we are aſſured by the unanimous concurrence of the Evangeliſts, that this Virgin's Name was Mary, the Daughter of Joachim and Anna, of the Tribe of Judah; and married to Joſeph, of the ſame Tribe. The Scripture indeed tells us no more of the Bleſſed Virgin's Parents, than that ſhe was of the Family of David, and of the Town of Bethlehem: not ſo much as their Names being mentioned, unleſs by Heli, in St. Luke's Genealogy, we underſtand Joachim the Virgin's Father. All that is ſaid concerning the Birth of Mary and her Parents is to be found only in ſome Apocryphal Writings; but which however are very ancient. St. John ſays, that Mary the Wife of Cleopas, who was the Mother of thoſe whom the Goſpel ſtyle our Lord's Brethren, was the Virgin's Siſter. Mary then was of the Royal Race of David. She was allied likewiſe to the Family of Aaron, ſince Elizabeth the Wife of Zacharias, and Mother of John the Baptiſt, was her Couſin.

The Latin Church, in Conformity to that of the Greeks, has for ſome Centuries paſt, honoured St. Joachim as the Father of St. Anne, the Mother of the Bleſſed Virgin.

Though God hath not been pleaſed

to

to acquaint us with the Particulars of her Birth; yet the Roman Church, from a greatful Senſe of the infinite Bleſſings conveyed to us by the Bleſſed Jeſus, hath long celebrated her Conception on the eighth of December in the Weſt, and the ninth in the Eaſt, and her Nativity on the eighth of September. An Anniverſary Feſtival of her Preſentation in the Temple is kept likewiſe on the 21ſt of November; and it is commonly believed, that ſhe was conſecrated to God at three Years of Age. But not to build upon Uncertainties, thus much we are aſſured by the Teſtimony of an Angel, that ſhe was happy above all other Women in the divine Favour; that ſhe was full of Grace; and that the Lord was with her in a peculiar Manner.

For ſince the Son of God, in order to become Man, and to dwell among us, was obliged to take a human Body from ſome Woman, it was agreeable to his infinite Wiſdom that he ſhould chuſe for this Purpoſe one whoſe Endowments of Body and Mind were moſt holy and pious; who excelled the reſt of her Sex in chaſte and virtuous Diſpoſitions; and who, in ſhort, was a Repoſitory of all the divine Graces.

The Exceſſes of that Devotion which has been paid to the Bleſſed Virgin, and the Legendary Tales and lying Viſions of Monks, cannot in Reaſon blemiſh her real Excellencies, no more than the Idolatries of the Pagans obſcure the Light of the Sun which they deify. After all the Abuſes of Superſtition or Profaneneſs, the Extremes of Honour and Diſhonour, there will ever be a very high Eſteem and Veneration due to the Mother of God.

That the Mother of our Lord, notwithſtanding her Marriage, was even in that ſtate to remain a pure Virgin, and to conceive Chriſt in a miraculous Manner, is the clear Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. "Behold, ſays Iſaiah, in chap. vii, propheſying of this myſterious Incarnation, a Virgin ſhall conceive and bear a Son." The Hebrew Word Almah moſt properly ſignifies Virgin; and ſo it is tranſlated here by all the ancient Interpreters; and never once uſed in the Scripture in any other Senſe, as ſeveral learned Men have proved againſt the Pretenſions particularly of the modern Jews. It primarily ſignifies hid, or concealed; whence it is uſed to denote a Virgin, becauſe of the Cuſtom in the Eaſtern Countries of keeping ſuch concealed from the view of Men, never ſuffering them to ſtir out of the Women's Apartment.

Tho' we cannot doubt but that God, who ordained this Myſtery, provided for all Circumſtances requiſite to its Accompliſhment; yet we may conſider which way a Decorum was preſerved in this Caſe by Marriage. St. Matthew ſays, "The Virgin was eſpouſed to Joſeph; and that before they came together, ſhe was found to be with Child of the Holy Ghoſt." Whence we may conclude that it was not a conſtant Cuſtom for the Bride to go and live at the Bride-groom's Houſe immediately upon her being affianced to him.

Notwithſtanding

Notwithſtanding the various Circumſtances relating to this Affair, as told us in apochryphal Books, are not to be relied on as certain; yet, however, Mary's Reſolution of Continency, even in a married State, cannot be called in queſtion, ſince her Virginity is atteſted by the Goſpel; and that herſelf, ſpeaking to the Angel, who declared to her that ſhe ſhould become the Mother of a Son, told him, "That ſhe knew not a Man;" or that ſhe lived in Continency with her Huſband. For which Reaſon, when Joſeph perceived her Pregnancy, he was at firſt ſo extremely ſurpriſed and ſcandalized at it, that he reſolved to put her away, but ſecretly, without making any Noiſe, and without obſerving the common Formalities: for he knew the mutual Reſolution they had agreed to, of being in Continence, tho' in a State of Marriage.

That ſhe obliged herſelf, notwithſtanding her Marriage, to perpetual Virginity, is plain; and Grotius is very inclinable to the ſame Opinion with the Romiſh Church in this point: and this is the beſt Way of accounting for the Reaſon of her Demand to the Angel, "How ſhall this be, ſeeing I know not Man?" If, ſays he, what Epiphanius has delivered from ancient Tradition be true, that Joſeph was a venerable old Man, and ſuperanuated when Mary was eſpouſed to him, it will be more probable what the ancients generally thought, that theſe Words proceeded from a Reſolution ſhe had taken of continuing a Virgin; and that ſhe had married herſelf to an aged Man, not to live with him in the ordinary Uſe of Marriage, and with a Proſpect of having Children; but only that he might be the Guardian of her Virginity, and ſhe might enjoy a Protection from thoſe Injuries to which her Sex would otherwiſe be expoſed. Nor were ſuch Reſolutions ſo unknown among the Jews, as ſome have imagined. This Grotius proves from a notable Paſſage in Philo; and of which he gives an Inſtance in Jephtha's Daughter. Mary then might be reſolute in her Purpoſe of Virginity, and yet become a Wife, for the above Reaſons. But the Deſign of God in her Marriage, was to ſecure her Reputation under the Circumſtances of ſupernatural Conception; and conceal the Myſtery of it for the preſent. And Joſeph being certified of the Divine Purpoſe herein, obediently conformed to it, and obſerved ſuch a chaſte and holy Converſation as was ſuitable to ſo high a Myſtery.

The Virgin Mary then being eſpouſed, or if you will, married to Joſeph, the Angel Gabriel appeared to her, in order to acquaint her, that ſhe ſhould become the Mother of the Meſſiah. Mary aſked him how that could be, ſince ſhe knew no Man? To which the Angel replied, That the Holy Ghoſt ſhould come upon her; and the Power of the Higheſt ſhould overſhadow her: ſo that ſhe ſhould conceive without the Concurrence of any Man. And to confirm what he had ſaid to her, and ſhew that nothing is impoſſible to God, he added, that her Couſin Elizabeth, who was both old and barren,

was

was then in the ſixth Month of her Pregnancy. Mary anſwered him, "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word." And by the miraculous Operation of the Holy Ghoſt, ſhe preſently conceived the Son of God; the true Emanuel, that is to ſay, God with us. Whether the Holy Virgin immediately after the Anunciation, went up to the Paſſover at Jeruſalem (as ſome have imagined, this being the Seaſon of the Year for it) or not, we have no Account from the Evangeliſt St. Luke: but this he aſſures us, that a little while after ſhe ſet out for Hebron, a City in the Mountains of Judah, in order to viſit her Couſin Elizabeth, to congratulate her upon her Pregnancy, which ſhe had learned from the Angel, at an Age when ſuch a Bleſſing was not uſually to be expected. And no ſooner had ſhe entered the Houſe and begun to ſpeak, than upon Elizabeth's hearing the Voice of Mary's Salutation, her Child, young John the Baptiſt, tranſported with ſupernatural Emotions of Joy leaped in her Womb. Whereupon ſhe was filled with the Holy Ghoſt; and being by Divine Inſpiration acquainted with the Myſtery of the Incarnation, ſhe reſaluted Mary, and cried out, "Bleſſed art thou amongſt Women; and bleſſed is the Fruit of thy Womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord ſhould come to me? For lo, as ſoon as the Voice of thy Salutation ſounded in mine Ears, the Babe leaped in my Womb for Joy. And Bleſſed is ſhe that believed: for there ſhall be a Performance of thoſe Things which were told her from the Lord." Then Mary, filled with Acknowledgments and ſupernatural Light, praiſed God, ſaying, "My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, &c." as we find it in the Hymn called Magnificat.

After Mary had continued here about three Months, till Elizabeth was delivered, as St. Ambroſe thinks, that ſhe might ſee him on whoſe Account ſhe principally made that Viſit, ſhe then returned to her own Houſe at Nazareth.

When ſhe was ready to be delivered, an Edict was publiſhed by Cæſar Auguſtus, in the Year of the World 4000, the firſt of Chriſt, and the third before the vulgar Æra; which decreed, that all the Subjects of the Roman Empire ſhould go to their reſpective Cities and Places; there to have their Names regiſtered according to their Families. Thus Joſeph and Mary, who were both of the Lineage of David, repaired to their City of Bethlehem, the original and native Place of their Family. But while they were in this City, the Time being fulfilled in which Mary was to be delivered, ſhe brought forth her firſt-born Son, wrapped him in Swaddling-cloaths, and laid him in the Manger of the Stable or Cavern whither they had retired; for they could find no Place in the public Inn, becauſe of the great Concourſe of People that were then at Bethlehem on the ſame Occaſion: Or they were forced to withdraw into the Stable of the Inn, not being able

to get a more convenient Place for her to be delivered in.

The Greek Fathers generally agree that the Place of Chriſt's Birth was a Cavern. Juſtin and Euſebius place it out of the City, but in the Neighbourhood; and St. Jerom ſays, it was at the Extremity of the City, towards the South. It was commonly believed that the Virgin brought forth Jeſus the Night after her Arrival at Bethlehem, or on the 25th of December. Such is the ancient Tradition of the Church. The Fathers inform us that Mary brought forth Jeſus Chriſt without Pain, and without the Aſſiſtance of any Midwife; becauſe ſhe had conceived him without Concupiſcence; and that neither ſhe nor the Fruit ſhe brought forth had any Share in the Curſe pronounced againſt Adam and Eve.

At the ſame Time the Angels made the Birth of Chriſt known to the Shepherds who were in the Fields near Bethlehem; and who came in the Night to ſee Mary and Joſeph, and the Child lying in the Manger, in order to pay him their Tribute of Adoration. Mary took Notice of all theſe Things, and laid them up in her Heart. Some Time after came the Magi, or Wiſemen from the Eaſt, and brought to Jeſus the myſterious Preſents of Gold, Frankincenſe and Myrrh, having been directed thither by a Star which led the Way before them to the very Houſe where the Babe lay. After this, being warned by an Angel that appeared to them in a Dream, they returned into their own Country, by a Way different from that by which ſhe came, without giving Herod the Intelligence he wanted; which he pretended was in order to come and worſhip the Babe, though his real Deſign was to cut him off, from a Jealouſy of his rivalling that artful Monarch in his Kingdom.

But the Time of Mary's Purification being come, that is, forty Days after the Birth of Jeſus, ſhe went to Jeruſalem, there to preſent her Son in the Temple; and there to offer the Sacrifice appointed by the Law, for the Purification of Women after Child-birth. At that Time there was at Jeruſalem an old Man named Simeon, who was full of the Holy Ghoſt; and had received a ſecret Aſſurance that he ſhould not die before he had ſeen Chriſt the Lord. Accordingly he came into the Temple by the impulſe of the Spirit of God, and taking the little Jeſus in his Arms, he bleſſed the Lord; and then addreſſing himſelf to Mary, ſaid, "This Child is ſent for the riſing and falling of many in Iſrael; and for a Sign which ſhall be ſpoke againſt: even ſo far as that thy own Soul ſhall be pierced as with a Sword, that the ſecret Thoughts in the Hearts of many may be diſcovered."

Afterwards, when Joſeph and Mary were preparing to return to their own Country of Nazareth, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joſeph in a Dream, bidding him to retire into Egypt with Mary and the Child, becauſe Herod had a Deſign to deſtroy Jeſus. Joſeph obeyed the Admonition, and continued in Egypt till after the Death of Herod; when both he and Mary returned

returned to Nazareth, not daring to go to Bethlehem, becauſe it was in the Juriſdiction of Archelaus, the Son and Succeſſor of Herod the Great.

Joſeph and Mary went every Year to Jeruſalem to the Feaſt of the Paſſover; and when Jeſus was twelve Years of Age, they brought him with them to the Capital. When the Days of the Feſtival were ended, they ſet out on their return Home; but the Child Jeſus continued at Jeruſalem, without their perceiving it; and thinking that he might be with ſome of the Company, they went on a Day's Journey: when not finding him among their Acquaintance, they returned to Jeruſalem, ſeeking for him. Three Days after they found him in the Temple, ſitting among the Doctors, hearing them, and aſking them Queſtions. When they ſaw him they were filled with Aſtoniſhment: and Mary ſaid to him, My Son, why have you ſerved us thus? Behold your Father and myſelf, who have ſought you in great Affliction. Jeſus anſwered them, Why did you ſeek me? Did not you know that I muſt be employed about my Father's Buſineſs? Afterwards he returned with them to Nazareth, and lived in filial Submiſſion to them: but his Mother laid up all theſe Things in her Heart. The Goſpel ſays nothing more of the Virgin Mary, till the Marriage at Cana of Galilee, where ſhe was preſent with her Son Jeſus.

In the thirty-third Year of Jeſus Chriſt, and the thirtieth of the vulgar Æra, our Saviour reſolved to manifeſt himſelf to the World, and therefore went to the Baptiſm of St. John, from thence into the Wilderneſs, and thence to the abovementioned Wedding, to which he, with his Mother and Diſciples had been invited. At this Entertainment, the Proviſion of Wine being ſomewhat ſcanty (probably becauſe the Friends of the married Couple were but mean) Chriſt's Mother told her Son, they had no Wine, not doubting of his Power to ſupply them: to which Jeſus anſwered in Terms which had ſome Appearance of a Rebuke, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come." St. Chryſoſtom, and the Followers of him in his Explications, impute what was ſaid by the Holy Virgin to ſome motive of Vanity, and that ſhe was tempted by a Deſire of ſeeing her own Credit raiſed by the Miracles of her Son; but the other Fathers and Commentators aſcribe it to her Charity and Compaſſion towards theſe poor People. And it is thought that Chriſt's Anſwer was intended for more general uſe than the preſent Occaſion: namely, to teach us to wait God's Time of doing his own Works? and certainly our Lord deſigned no affront to his Mother, to whom he always paid a pious and filial Reverence. This Anſwer is imputed by the ſaid Fathers and Commentators to Jeſus, not as Man; but to Jeſus as God. In this Reſpect he ſays to Mary, what have I to do with thee? I know when I ought to ſhew forth my Power; nor does it belong to you to appoint me the Time of working Miracles, ſince the proper Time for this has not yet begun; and fur-

ther intimating, that when it did, theſe were not to be wrought out of any private, partial, and civil Views, but in purſuance of that great End which he had in Charge, the Converſion and Salvation of Mankind. And ſo his Mother underſtood him, receiving the Anſwer with meekneſs; and charging the Servants to attend him, and do whatever he commanded them.

There being in the Room ſix great Stone Pitchers, Jeſus ordered them to be filled brim full of Water; and afterwards commanded the Servants to fill out and carry it to the Maſter of the Feaſt, who on taſting it found it was excellent Wine. And this is the firſt miracle Jeſus wrought at the begining of his public Miniſtry.

From hence our Lord went to Capernaum with his Mother and Brethren; that is, with his Relations and Diſciples, in order, as St. Chryſoſtom thinks, to fix the Virgin Mary in a ſettled Habitation, while he travelled about the Country in the Exerciſe of his Miniſtry: and this indeed ſeems to be the Place where the Holy Virgin afterwards principally reſided. St. Epiphanius, on the contrary, believes that ſhe followed him every where, during the whole Time of his preaching; though we do not find that the Evangeliſts make any mention of her when they ſpeak of ſeveral holy Women of Galilee, who followed him and miniſtered to his Neceſſities.

We learn indeed from the third Chapter of St. Mark, that on a certain Day in the Year of Chriſt 34, and vulgar Æra 21, that as Jeſus Chriſt was teaching in a Houſe at Capernaum, ſo great a Croud of People ſtood about him, that neither he nor his Diſciples had time to take any Refreſhment; which cauſed a Report to be ſpread abroad, that he had fainted away, or was fallen into a Swoon: thus Grotius interprets the Word exeſte. The Greek Term might inſinuate that he was become Mad, or had loſt his Underſtanding; and the Vulgate reads it, dicebant enim quoniam in furorem verſus eſt, which our Tranſlators have rendered, "They ſaid he was beſides himſelf." The Mother of Jeſus and his Brethren, as it was natural for them, upon hearing ſuch a Report, came inſtantly to ſeek him, and endeavoured to take him out of the Croud, in order to give him all the Relief in their Power. It was not the People, without doubt, who made ſo wrong a Judgment of Jeſus; but the ignorant Multitude, or the Phariſees, who ſaid in the ſame Place that he was poſſeſſed of the Devil. The Virgin, and the Brethren or Relations of Jeſus came therefore to ſee what had given occaſion to this Report. And when they could not get into the Houſe for the Throng of People, they cauſed a Meſſage to be conveyed from one to another, till it was told Jeſus, "That his Mother and his Brethren were at the Door, and deſired to ſpeak with his." Jeſus being accordingly informed of their coming, and that they waited to ſpeak with him, being at that Inſtant engaged in the work of his Miniſtry, preaching the Word of God, he made this reply: Who is my Mother,

ther, and who are my Brethren? And looking upon thoſe that were round about him, he ſaid, Theſe are my Mother and Brethren; declaring, "That whoſoever did the Will of his heavenly Father, the ſame was his Mother, and Siſter, and Brother." This was what Chriſt had taught in another Place, that we muſt prefer God to all human Relations, and give the Preference to his Service. But this Saying could not reflect upon his Mother, who was among the principal of thoſe who did the Will of his heavenly Father. Immediately upon her approach, a Woman of the Company ſaid with a loud Voice, directing her Words to Jeſus: "Bleſſed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou haſt ſucked." To which he replied, "Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." Not intimating hereby, that ſhe who had the Honour to bear him, did not deſerve to be called bleſſed throughout all generations; but that even her Happineſs conſiſted more in doing the Will of Chriſt, than in giving him a human Body.

From this Time we have no further Account of the Holy Virgin, till we find her in Jeruſalem, at the laſt Paſſover our Saviour celebrated there; which was in the thirty-ſixth Year of Chriſt, and thirty-third of the vulgar Æra. In this City ſhe ſaw all that was tranſacted againſt him, followed him to Mount Calvary, and ſtayed at the Foot of the Croſs during the Paſſion of her bleſſed Son. We cannot doubt but her Soul was at this Time pierced through, as old Simon had propheſied, with the moſt acute Pains, for the Death of ſuch a Son. Yet her Conſtancy was remarkable: For when the Apoſtles were all frightened away from their Maſter, ſhe with a Courage undaunted, and worthy of the Mother of God, continued even in the Midſt of the Executioners, being prepared to die with her Son.

On this melancholy Occaſion, we cannot but ſuppoſe the holy Virgin to have been affected with Sentiments, fit for one who had ſo miraculouſly conceived, and ſo careſully obſerved and laid up in her Mind, all Occurrences that related to the Son of God.

Jeſus Chriſt, who came to ſet us a Pattern of all Virtue through the whole Courſe of his Life, was pleaſed in his laſt Moments to teach us, that in what Circumſtances ſoever we are, we muſt never caſt off that Love and Care, which God's Law obliges us to have for thoſe who gave us Life. Being now ready to leave the World, and ſeeing his Mother at the Foot of the Croſs, and his beloved Diſciple, St. John, near her, he bequeathed her to him by his laſt Will and Teſtament, ſaying to his Mother, "Woman, behold thy Son." And to the Diſciple, "Behold thy Mother," And from that Hour the Diſciple took her home to his own Houſe.

It is not to be doubted, but that our Saviour appeared to his holy Mother immediately after his Reſurrection; and that ſhe was the firſt, or at leaſt one of the firſt, to whom he vouchſafed this great Conſolation.

St.

St. Luke acquaints us in the firſt Chapter of the Acts, that the Virgin Mary was with the Apoſtles and others at his Aſcenſion, and continued with them when aſſembled at Jeruſalem after his Aſcenſion, waiting for the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt: And it is highly probable, that from her they learned the whole Hiſtory of our Lord's private Life before his Baptiſm; though St. Chryſoſtom will have them to be taught it by Revalation. After this ſhe dwelt in the Houſe of St. John the Evangeliſt, who took Care of her as of his own Mother. 'Tis thought that he took her along with him to Epheſus, where ſhe died in an extreme old Age: And there is a Letter of the Oecumenical Council of Epheſus, importing, that in the fifth Century it was believed ſhe was buried there.

Yet this Opinion was not ſo univerſally received, but that ſome Authors of the ſame Age think the Virgin Mary died and was buried at Jeruſalem; or rather in her Sepulchre at Gethſemane, near that City, where to this Day it is ſhewn in a magnificent Church dedicated to her Name.

Epiphanius, the moſt learned Father of the fourth Century, declares he could not tell whether ſhe died a natural Death, or by Martyrdom; or whether ſhe remained immortal; or whether ſhe was buried or not. "None, ſays he, knows any thing of her deceaſe: But that it was glorious cannot be doubted. That Body, which was perfectly chaſte and pure, enjoys a Happineſs worthy of her, through whom the Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe and ſhone upon the World."

A learned Writer has added to the forecited Paſſage of the Council of Epheſus, another Remark from their Acts; "That the Cathedral Church of Epheſus was dedicated under the Name of the Virgin Mary; and that we find no other Church of her Name at that Time in any approved Author." For though the holy Virgin was always held in great Veneration, yet it was not the Cuſtom of the firſt Ages to give the Name of any Saint to a Church, except they had ſome of the Relicks, or built it in the Place where ſuch a Saint was martyred; or for ſome Reaſon of the like Nature.

The Sentiments of the Roman Church are, that ſhe is dead: But they are divided as to her riſing again; or whether ſhe ſtays for the general Reſurrection at Epheſus, Jeruſalem, or any other Place.

With Regard to the Age at which ſhe died, and the preciſe Year of her Death, 'tis needleſs to trouble ourſelves about this Enquiry; ſince nothing can be ſaid on theſe Matters but what is very doubtful: And they cannot be fixed but at random. Nicephorus Calliſtus, and thoſe that have followed him, give no Proof of what they advance on this Subject, and therefore deſerve no Credit. Nor ſhall we build much upon the Deſcription of the holy Virgin given us by the ſame Author, who ſays, that ſhe was of a moderate Stature; or, according to ſome, a little below the ordinary Stature of Women:

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That her Complexion was of the Colour of Wheat, her Hair fair, her Eyes lively, the Eyeballs yellowiſh, or olive-coloured, her Eye-brows black and ſemicircular, her Noſe pretty long, her Lips red, her Hands and Fingers large, her Air grave, ſimple, and modeſt, her Clothes neat without any Pride or Oſtentation, and of the natu- Colour of the Wool. It has been pretended that St. Luke had drawn her Picture; and in ſeveral Places are ſhewn Pictures of her, which they affirm to be Copies from that Original by St. Luke. But the Ancients have no where informed us that St. Luke was a Painter, or that he had painted the holy Virgin. The above-mentioned Nicephorus Calliſtus, an Author of the fourteenth Century, is the firſt who has ſpoken of this in a poſitive Manner; but Theodorus, Lecturer of the Church of Conſtantinople, who lived in the ſixth Century, ſays, that Eudocia ſent from Jeruſalem to Conſtantinople to the Empreſs Pulcheria, a Picture of the holy Virgin, painted by St. Luke. But we need be in no great Pain about this, ſince the true Images of Saints are the Ideas of their Virtues which we ſhould form in our Minds, and expreſs by our Actions. Certain it is that this holy Evangeliſt has acquainted us with ſome Particulars of the Life of the holy Virgin, that could hardly be learned from any one but herſelf; which may incline us to believe that he had the Happineſs of her Acquaintance, and a good Share of her Confidence.

With regard to her Character, we ſhall only mention in general, that common Remark which the Evangeliſts make, that ſhe was more diſpoſed to think than to ſpeak; and obſerved the extraordinary Things which were ſaid of her Son with ſilence; or, as they expreſs it, " She pondered them in her Heart."

There are ſhewn ſome Letters of the Virgin Mary to St. Ignatius the Martyr, and from St. Ignatius to the Virgin. St. Bernard believed them to be genuine; but now no one doubts that they are ſpurious. The ſame Judgement is formed about the pretended Letters of the Virgin to the People of Miſſina, and to thoſe of Florence; which they pretend ſhe wrote from Jeruſalem in Hebrew, but were tranſlated by St. Paul into Greek; at leaſt that to the Meſſinians, and which Conſtantine Laſcaris turned into Latin.

The Viſions and Revelations which ſome Romiſh Monks pretend to have had of the bleſſed Virgin, ſufficiently deſtroy themſelves, as being not only abſurd and ridiculous, but inconſiſtent with her Honour and Sanctity: but we cannot from hence abſolutely conclude that ſhe never appeared to any Holy Perſons; and as ſome of the Fathers of the Church give an Account of ſuch Apparitions, we ſhall ſelect the following.

St. Gregory Nyſſen reports of Gregory Thaumaturgus, that he being made Biſhop of Neo Cæſaria in Pontus, and very ſolicitous concerning the Doctrine which he ſhould preach to his People, the bleſſed Virgin appeared to him in a Form more glori-

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ous than any Thing upon Earth, with St. John the Apoſtle in her Company, to whom ſhe recommended the inſtructing of Gregory in the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion. Upon which the Apoſtle dictated to him a ſhort Confeſſion of Faith, which Gregory forthwith committed to writing. This was preſerved afterwards with the greateſt Care, and Gregory Nyſſen aſſures us, that it became the ſtanding Creed of Neo Cæſarea; and kept that Church clear from Arianiſm, whilſt all other Places were infected with it.

Gregory Nazianzen likewiſe gives us the following Relation: That St. Juſtina the Virgin, who ſuffered Martyrdom under Diocleſian, ſeeing herſelf attacked by the magic Arts which Cyprian employed againſt her, had Recourſe to the Virgin Mary, and intreated her to ſuccour a helpleſs Maid againſt the infernal Powers. Her Prayers were heard, the Devils vanquiſhed; Cyprian was thereupon converted, and embraced the Chriſtan Faith, and was afterwards an illuſtrious Biſhop, and obtained the Crown of Martyrdom with St. Juſtina. This Story, ſays Phocius, was largely mentioned by the Empreſs Eudocia, in an heroic Poem of three Books. Biſhop Fell thinks that this Story which is told of St. Cyprian, is much interpolated, or rather invented by one of thoſe, who took Pleaſure in improving the Lives of Martyrs with ſome new Materials. Dr. Cave juſtly ſuſpects, that this Cyprian is a different Perſon from the great Biſhop of Carthage, and by Miſtake confounded with him by Nazianzen, Prudentius, Metapraſtus, and others. However, he truly obſerves, that the Hiſtory is older than the Times of Nazianzen.

But not to lay greater Streſs upon ſuch Things than they challenge from the Credit of the Relators, and the Probability which they carry upon the Face of them, let it ſuffice to have mentioned only theſe two Inſtances, and refer the Credibility to the Judgment of the candid Reader.

The Jews, thoſe profeſſed Enemies of our Saviour, that gentile Brood of blinded Progenitors, and obſtinate Miſcreants, have vented many Falſities againſt the Virgin Mary, in the Book called Toledos Jeſu; or, the Life of Jeſus Chriſt; which they themſelves have publiſhed. From this Treatiſe ſome of our puny modern Deiſts, aſſembled in their petty mechanical Clubs of the Robin Hood, &c. ſeem to have adopted thoſe infamous Notions that tend to blacken the Virgin, with Regard to our Saviour's Deſcent and Birth; and in direct Oppoſition to the evangelical Hiſtory of that ſacred Event. However contemptible, in reality, ſuch Adverſaries are upon ſeveral Accounts, thus much ſeemed neceſſary to be ſaid, in order to obviate the Poiſon which they ſpread among the middle, and lower Claſſes of Mankind, among which they are converſant, and whence the Heroes of that Sect principally ſpring up.

The Mahometans, on the contrary, entertain great Sentiments of Reſpect and Eſteem for her; which one would hardly believe of People ſo far out of the

the Way of Salvation. See the Chapter in the Alcoran, about Mary and Herbelot. But they do not confine themſelves within the Bounds of Truth and Sobriety; for they add many fabulous Stories, which we ſhall not repeat, to what are otherwiſe known concerning Mary.

As to the Purity of the Holy Virgin, in her Birth, and in the Conception of the Word; and with Regard to her Virginity, both before and after her bringing-forth, they ſpeak in ſuch a Manner as might well be a Shame to many Chriſtians, and particularly quaſh the brutal Effrontery of the abovementioned pygmean Antagoniſts, in their impudent Attempts to depreciate her; the main Drift of which Glances at, and is plainly meant as a ſecret Thruſt againſt her great and heavenly Progeny.

The Mahometans ſay, in Conformity to the Goſpel Account, "That the Angel Gabriel was ſent to Mary, to declare to her the Birth of Jeſus Chriſt." And further, he ſaid to her, "O Mary thou art elected, purified, and in a moſt particular Manner choſen from among all the Women in the World! O Mary, ſubmit yourſelf to the Lord, proſtrate yourſelf, and adore him with all the Creatures that worſhip him. I am come to tell you a great Secret: God declares his Word to you, whoſe Name ſhall be Chriſt, or Jeſus the Meſſiah, who ſhall be your Son, moſt worthy of Reſpect, both in this and the other World."

Abulfarage writes in his Dynaſties, that it was a Tradition among the oriental Chriſtians, that the holy Virgin was but thirteen Years of Age when ſhe brought forth Jeſus Chriſt; and that ſhe lived but to be fifty-one.

Some Muſſulmen falſely impute to the Chriſtians, that they acknowledge the Virgin Mary as the third Perſon of the holy Trinity; which Miſtake proceeds from hence, that the Chriſtians of the Eaſt give her the Name of Alſeidai, which ſignifies the Lady: and among the Greek Fathers St. Cyril has unguardedly called her, "The Supplement or Completion of the moſt holy Trinity." But others among the Mahometans vindicate us from this Calumny.

Towards the End of the fourth Century, the Perpetual Virginity of the Mother of our Lord was oppoſed by ſome. Epiphanius gives them the Name of Antidico-marianiſts, or Enemies to Mary. They held, that after the Birth of Jeſus Chriſt, Joſeph had other Children by her, whom the Goſpel ſtiles the Brethren of our Lord. This Conceit, which came originally from the Eunomians and Apolinariſts, ſpread itſelf more particularly in Arabia. A while after it was carried to Rome by Helvidius, and entertained by a certain Biſhop who is thought to be the Hereſiarch Bonoſos; but it pleaſed God to ſuppreſs it by three of the greateſt Men of that Age, namely, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerom, and St. Ambroſe; to ſay nothing of St. Auguſtine, who did not write profeſſedly againſt it, but encountered it by the bye.

Without reciting here the Arguments which they made uſe of on

this Occaſion, it may ſuffice to conclude with St. Baſil. That though this Opinion does not affect the Foundations of Religion, which only requires us to believe, that Mary continued a Virgin till the Birth of Jeſus Chriſt, as the Goſpel aſſure us, yet it offends the Ears of pious Chriſtians for any to affirm that ſhe ever ceaſed to be ſuch.

The ancient Fathers of the eaſtern and weſtern Churches aſſerted her perpetual Virginity; and St. Auguſtine tells us, that this is one of thoſe Points which we ought to receive as of apoſtolic Tradition, ſince the holy Scripture gives us no more Account of it, than by only remarking how fully the Bleſſed Virgin was reſolved to ſerve God with an entire Purity. The Title which hath been conſtantly appropriated to her in all Ages, as often as ſhe is mentioned, is a good Argument to confirm this Belief.

Biſhop Pearſon is wholly of this Opinion, in his Expoſition of the Apoſtles Creed: "We believe, ſays he, the Mother of our Lord to have been not only before and after his Nativity, but alſo for ever, the moſt immaculate and Bleſſed Virgin. For though it may be thought ſufficient, as to the Myſtery of the Incarnation, that when our Saviour was conceived and born, his Mother was a Virgin; though whatſoever ſhould have followed after, could have no reflective Operation upon the firſt Fruit of her Womb; though there be no farther Mention in the Creed, than that he was born of the Virgin Mary; yet the peculiar Eminency and unparalled Privilege of that Mother, the ſpecial Honour and Reverence due to that Son, and ever paid by her; the Regard of that Holy Ghoſt who came upon her, and the Power of the Higheſt which overſhadowed her; the ſingular Goodneſs and Piety of Joſeph, to whom ſhe was eſpouſed, have perſuaded the Church of God in all Ages to believe, that ſhe ſtill continued in the ſame Virginity; and therefore is to be acknowled aei parthenos as the Greek Church always called her; and from them the Latin, ſemper virgo, "The perpetual Virgin;" as if the Gate of the Sanctuary in the Prophet Ezekiel were to be underſtood of her: "This Gate ſhall be ſhut; it ſhall not be opened, and no Man ſhall enter in by it, becauſe the Lord, the God of Iſrael, hath entered in by it; therefore it ſhall be ſhut." Many indeed have taken the Boldneſs to deny this Truth, becauſe not recorded in the ſacred Writings: and not only ſo, but to aſſert the contrary, as delivered in the Scriptures; but with no Succeſs. For though as they object St. Matthew teſtified, "That Joſeph knew not Mary, until ſhe had brought forth her firſt-born Son." From whence they would infer, that afterwards he knew her; yet the Manner of the Scripture Language produceth no ſuch Inference. When God ſaid to Jacob, "I will not leave thee untill I have done that which I have ſpoken to thee of," Gen. xviii. 18. It follows not, that when that was done the God of Jacob left him. When the Concluſion of Deuteronomy was written, it was ſaid of Moſes, "No Man knoweth of his Sepulchre unto this Day." But

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it were a weak Argument to infer from thence, that the Sepulchre of Moſes hath not been known ever ſince. Again, 'tis true that Chriſt is termed the firſt-born Son of Mary. From whence they infer ſhe muſt needs have a Second; but might as well conclude, that whereſoever there is one, there muſt be two. For in this particular, the Scripture Notion of Priority excludeth an Antecedent, but inferreth not a Conſequent. It ſuppoſeth none to have gone before, but concludeth not any to follow after. "Sanctify unto me (ſaith God) all the Firſt-born;" which was a firm and fixed Law, immediately obliging upon the Birth. Whereas, if the Firſt-born had included a Relation to a ſecond, there could have been no preſent Certainty, but a Suſpenſion of Obedience. Nor had the Firſt-born been ſanctified of itſelf, but the Second had ſanctified the Firſt.

As to our Lord's Brethren, it has been hinted before in what Senſe they are ſo called.

Some, inſtead of leſſening, have over-magnified the Bleſſed Virgin, reſpecting her as a Goddeſs, and offering up Prayers and Oblations in her Name; and particularly a Kind of Bread or Cake which the Greeks called Kolkura (or Collyride) whence theſe Heretics were named Collyridians. Theſe were principally a ſet of Women in Arabia, who fell into this Kind of Idolatry. Epiphanius wrote on Purpoſe to confute this Superſtition, ſhewing, how the Honour due to the Bleſſed Virgin ought to be diſtinguiſhed from that Adoration and Worſhip which are proper to God alone; leſt we ſhould glorify the Creature inſtead of the Creator.

The Neſtorians came next in order of Time; and attributed too little to the Bleſſed Virgin, denying her the honourable Appellation which the Church then, and long before had given her of Theotokos that is "The Mother of God," becauſe they would not allow that her Son was God incarnate. They were condemned by a general Council held at Epheſus in the Year 431.

The Eutychian Heretics, who quickly followed the Neſtorians, ran into the contrary extreme. For pretending to draw an Argument for their Hereſy from the Quality of the Mother of God, they gloried in paying her more Honour than the Catholicks. And Peter Fullo, one of the worſt of them, who had thrice uſurped the See of Antioch, was the firſt who began to call upon her by Way of Invocation in Prayer; in which he was too groſly followed by thoſe who otherwiſe condemn him as a Heretic, I mean thoſe of the Romiſh Communion.

The Worſhip of the Virgin Mary univerſally prevails, in the Countries where the Romiſh Religion is profeſſed, but no where with greater pomp of Superſtition, and ſplendor of outward Veneration than at Loretto, a City in the Marquiſate of Ancona, belonging to the Eccleſiaſtical State in Italy, where is an immenſe Profuſion of Treaſure, which has been offered to her at different Times, by the Votaries of that Religion in all Ages, ever ſince the Romiſh Clergy have made

the Belief paſs current, that the Santa Caſa, or holy Houſe, in which the bleſſed Virgin Mary is ſaid to have been born, ſaluted by the Angel, and brought up her Son till he was twelve Years of Age, and which the Roman Catholics pretend, was by the Miniſtry of Angels carried through the Air, from Galilee to Terſato in Dalmatia, on the Eaſt Side of the Adriatic Sea, in the Year 1291, and in three Years and a half afterwards tranſported over the Gulf of Venice into Italy, and after two or three ſhort Migrations or Removals, was at length fixed in its preſent Situation at Loretto. Over this holy Houſe is a magnificent Church built, and in it an Image of the bleſſed Virgin placed in a Niche, with the heavenly Infant on her right Arm, and a triple Crown on her Head, the whole Statue being covered with Diamonds and Pearls, and round it a ſort of Rainbow, of precious Stones of various Colours. All the Altars, Utenſils, and Ornaments are immenſely rich. The Sacriſty or Treaſury is filled with Jewels, Gold Veſſels, and Ornaments more precious than Gold itſelf; the votive Preſents of Emperors, Kings, Princes, Empreſſes, Queens, Popes, and other Perſonages of both Sexes, for theſe many hundred Years paſt: Works of Silver are not thought worthy to be admitted here. The whole is computed to be worth nine Millions of Rix-dollars. The annual Revenue of the Santa Caſa, in Land, &c. is between twenty-ſeven and thirty Thouſand Crowns, beſides Preſents and votive Donations. To this holy Houſe five hundred thouſand Pilgrims have often reſorted in one Year, between Eaſter and Whitſuntide; and during two Days in September, at the Feſtival of the bleſſed Virgin's Nativity, no leſs than two hundred thouſand have viſited Loretto. This prodigious Concourſe of People was indeed before the Reformation; but the uſual Number now is between forty and fifty Thouſand: And as none of theſe come empty handed, we may eaſily conclude, that its Riches are ſtill increaſing. This is reckoned by all good Catholics, to be the moſt ſacred Place under Heaven.

" Some Writers, ſays Dr. Nichols, both in the Greek and Latin Church, tell a ſtrange Story about the bleſſed Virgin's Aſſumption into Heaven; and that with a great Variety in their Relations; ſome affirming her to be conveyed thither alive, like Enoch and Elias: Others, that after her Death ſhe roſe again, and was carried triumphantly into Heaven. But all the Hiſtory of this Tranſlation is taken from apocryphal Books, which deſerve not much Credit. And though the Church of Rome has adopted this Story into her Worſhip, and celebrates it annually with a particular Service on the fifteenth of Auguſt; yet the Authors who ſupport this Hiſtory, are condemned by all the learned Men of that Church. I muſt own, that this Notion is of conſiderable Antiquity; for 'tis undoubtedly as old as Epiphanius, who in his Account of it ſays, " he will do nothing to depreciate the Honour of the Virgin; and

and therefore will neither give his Aſſent to that Opinion, nor yet contradict it; but rather acquieſce in the Scriptures, which ſay nothing at all of it."

MARY of CLEOPHAS.

ST. Jerom ſays, that Mary had the Name of Cleophas, on Account of her Father, her Family, or ſome other Reaſon not known. Others believe with greater Probability, that ſhe was Wife of Cleophas, and Mother of St. James the Leſs, and of St. Simon, the Brethren of our Lord. Theſe latter Authors take Mary the Mother of James, and Mary, Wife of Cleophas, to be the ſame Perſon. St. John gives her the Name of Mary, Wife of Cleophas, and the other three Evangeliſts, Mary, Mother of James. Cleophas and Alpheus are the ſame Man; as James Son of Mary, Wife of Cleophas, is the ſame as James Son of Alpheus. In the Hebrew Tongue, Alpheus and Cleophas differ only in the Manner in which the Greeks have written and pronounced theſe two Names. Cleophas may be derived from the Hebrew Cheleph, which ſignifies, to change; as much as to ſay inconſtant, or given to Change; or from the City of Cheleph or Heleph, mentioned in the 19th Chapter of Joſhua; and which was a frontier Town of Napthali in Galilee; ſo that Cleophas or Alpheus might be of this City originally.

But to return from this Digreſſion to Mary, Wife of Cleophas: We know but very few Particulars of her Life. 'Tis thought ſhe was the Siſter of the holy Virgin, and that ſhe was the Mother of James the Leſs, of Joſes, of Simeon, and of Judas, which in the Goſpel are called the Brethren of Jeſus Chriſt, that is, his Couſin-germans. She believed early in Chriſt, and kept him Company in his Journeys, in order to miniſter to him. She was preſent at the laſt Paſſover, juſt before the Death of our Saviour; ſhe followed him to Mount Calvary; and during his Paſſion ſhe was together with the Virgin, at the Foot of his Croſs. She was alſo preſent at his burial, and on the Friday before had prepared the Perfumes for embalming of him. But going to his Tomb very early on Sunday morning, with ſome of the other Women, they learned from the Mouth of an Angel, that he was riſen; the News of which they carried to the Apoſtles. By the Way Jeſus appeared to them; and they embraced his Feet worſhipping him. The Year when Mary the Wife of Cleophas died is not known; but the Greeks keep the eighth of April in Memory of the holy

ly Women, who brought Perfumes to embalm the Body of Chriſt, and pretend to have their Bodies at Conſtantinople in a Church of the holy Virgin, built by Juſtin II. The Roman Martyrology marks the Feſtival of St. Mary, the Wife of Cleophas, on the 9th of April; and will have, that her Body was tranſlated into the City of Veroli near Rome. Others ſay, and doubtleſs with equal Truth, that her Relicts are preſerved in a little City of Provence called the three Marys, ſituated near the Sea, on the Banks of the Rhone.

MARY SALOME.

MARY Salome was the Daughter of Mary Cleophas, mentioned in the preceding Article, and the Siſter of St. James the Leſs, and others who are in Scripture called the Brethren of our Lord. She was couſin-german to the bleſſed Jeſus, according to the Fleſh, and Niece to the bleſſed Virgin Mary. Her proper Name was Salome, and was improperly called Mary, which was the Name of her Mother.

Others will have it, that Salome was the Daughter of Joſeph, the Huſband of the holy Virgin, founding their Opinion on the Teſtimony of Epiphanius.

But however this be, ſhe was the Huſband of Zebedee, and Mother of St. James the Great, and St. John the Evangeliſt. She was alſo one of thoſe holy Women that uſed to attend upon our bleſſed Saviour in his Journeys, and to miniſter to him. It was ſhe that requeſted Jeſus to place her two Sons James and John, the one on his right Hand and the other on his left in his Kingdom. But the Son of God anſwered her and her two Sons: "Ye know not what ye aſk. Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I ſhall drink of, and be baptized with the Baptiſm that I am baptized with?" They ſay unto him, "We are able. And he ſaith unto them, ye ſhall drink indeed of my Cup, and be baptiſed with the Baptiſm that I am baptiſed with; but to ſit on my right Hand and on my Left is not mine to give, but it ſhall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

Salome gave a remarkable Proof of her Faith when ſhe followed the bleſſed Jeſus to Calvary, and did not forſake him even at the Croſs. She was alſo one of the holy Women who brought Perfumes to embalm him, and for that purpoſe came early on the Sunday Morning to the Sepulchre. As they walked towards the Place where their great Lord and Maſter was interred,

red, they ſaid one to another, " Who ſhall roll away the Stone from the Mouth of the Sepulchre?" But when they came thither, they found the Obſtacle already removed, and ſaw a Meſſenger from the Courts of Heaven, who informed them, that the bleſſed Jeſus was riſen from the Chambers of the Duſt. As they were returning to Jeruſalem, to carry theſe welcome Tidings to the Diſciples, Jeſus himſelf appeared to them and ſaid, " Be not afraid; go tell my Brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there they ſhall ſee me."

We find no farther particulars in the ſacred Writings concerning Salome; and what is related concerning her in many ſpurious Hiſtories, does not deſerve to be mentioned. I ſhall therefore only add, that, according to the Roman Martyrology, ſhe died at Jeruſalem on the 22d of October, but in what Year is uncertain.

MARY the Siſter of LAZARUS.

THIS holy Woman has been preposterouſly confounded with the ſinful Perſon who ſat at the Feet of the bleſſed Jeſus weeping, while he was at Meat in the Houſe of Simon the Leper. (ſee Luke vii. 37, 39.) Who this Sinner was is unknown, ſome will have her to be Mary Magdalene: but this Opinion has nothing more than conjecture for its Baſis.

But whoever this Sinner was, ſhe was a very different Perſon from Mary the Siſter of Lazarus, who, with her Siſter Martha, lived with their Brother at Bethany, a Village near Jeruſalem. The bleſſed Jeſus had a particular Affection for this Family, and often retired to their Houſe with his Diſciples. One Day, and perhaps the firſt Time that Jeſus went thither, Martha received him with remarkable Affection, and took the greateſt Pains in providing a proper Entertainment for him; but Mary her Siſter continued ſitting at our Saviour's Feet, liſtening to his Words with peculiar Attention. This Martha conſidered as an Inſtance of Diſreſpect, and therefore ſaid to Jeſus, " Lord, doſt thou not care that my Siſter, has left me to ſerve alone? bid her therefore that ſhe help me." But the bleſſed Jeſus juſtified Mary, by telling her Siſter, that ſhe had choſen the better Part, which ſhould not be taken from her.

Some Time after their Brother Lazarus fell Sick, and his Siſters ſent to acquaint Jeſus of the misfortune; but he did not arrive at Bethany till after Lazarus was dead. Martha hearing Jeſus was come into the Neighbourhood, came to him and told him, that

if

if he had not been abſent her Brother had been ſtill alive. Jeſus promiſed her that her Brother ſhould riſe again. To which Martha anſwered, "I know that he ſhall riſe again at the laſt Day." Jeſus replied, "I am the Reſurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, tho' he were dead yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth, and believeth in me, ſhall never die; believeſt thou this?" Martha anſwered, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Chriſt the Son of God, which ſhould come into the World." Having ſaid this ſhe departed, and gave her Siſter Notice privately, that Jeſus was come. Mary, as ſoon as ſhe heard the welcome Tidings, aroſe and went to Jeſus; and has Martha had done before her, ſaid, "Lord if thou hadſt been here, my Brother had not died." The bleſſed Jeſus was greatly moved at the pathetic Complaints of theſe two worthy Siſters, and on aſking where they had buried him, they conducted him to the Sepulchre. On his arrival at the Place where the Body of Lazarus was depoſited, the great Redeemer of Mankind groaned deeply in his Spirit: he wept, he prayed to his Father, and then cried with a loud Voice, "Lazarus come forth." The Dead obeyed the Voice of the Son of God, Lazarus immediately revived, and Jeſus reſtored him to his Siſters.

After performing this ſtupendous Miracle, Jeſus departed from the Neighbourhood of Jeruſalem and did not return thither till ſome Days before the Paſſover. Six Days, before that Feſtival Jeſus came again to Bethany with his Diſciples, and was invited to Supper at the Houſe of Simon the Leper. Martha attended, and Lazarus was one of the Gueſts. During the Supper, Mary, to expreſs her Gratitude, took a Pound of Spikenard, a very precious Perfume, and poured it on the Head and Feet of Jeſus, wiping his Feet with the Hair of her Head; and the whole Houſe was filled with the Odour of the Ointment. Judas Iſcariot was highly offended at this generous Action; but his Maſter vindicated Mary, and told him that by this ſhe had prevented his Embalment, ſignifying, that his Death and Burial were at Hand.

After this we have no Account of Mary, the Siſter of Lazarus, in the ſacred Writings. Several Authors indeed, by not diſtinguiſhing properly between Mary the Siſter of Martha, and Mary Magdalene, ſay, that ſhe was preſent at the Crucifixion of the great Redeemer of Mankind; and alſo that both ſhe and her Siſter accompanied the Women who went to embalm his Body. This is not indeed improbable; but it is certain neither of them are particularly mentioned by the Evangeliſts. The ancient Latins believed, and the Greeks are ſtill of the ſame Opinion, that both Martha and Mary continued at Jeruſalem, and died there; and ſeveral antient Martyrologies place their Feaſt on the nineteenth of January.

MARY

MARY MAGDALENE.

MARY Magdalene was a Native either of Magdala, a Town in Galilee, on the other ſide Jordan, or Magdalos, a Town ſituated at the Foot of Mount Carmel, and had her Sirname from the Place of her Birth. Some will have it that ſhe was the Sinner mentioned by St. Luke, chap. vii. 36, &c. But this Opinion is built only on conjecture. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us, that Jeſus had caſt out of her ſeven Devils; which ſome underſtand in a literal, and others in a figurative Senſe.

But however this be ſhe became a conſtant Attendant on the bleſſed Jeſus, after he had removed her Plague. She followed him to Mount Calvary, continued amidſt the Roman Guards at the Foot of the Croſs, with the holy Virgin, and ſaw his precious Body laid in the Tomb. After which ſhe returned to Jeruſalem to purchaſe Spices to embalm him as ſoon as the Sabbath was over.

It was ſhe who carried the welcome Tidings to Peter and John; and to her our bleſſed Lord himſelf firſt appeared after his Reſurrection. The Apoſtles did not however believe her Report till it was confirmed by others, and they themſelves had ſeen the Saviour of the World.

We have no farther Account of Mary Magdalene in the ſacred Writings. But Modeſtus, Archbiſhop of Conſtantinople in the ſeventh Century, tells us, that ſhe continued at Jeruſalem till the Death of the holy Virgin, after which ſhe retired to Epheſus, and lived with St John till ſhe ſealed the Faith ſhe had ſo long profeſſed with her Blood. She was buried by the Chriſtians at Epheſus, where her Tomb was ſhewn in the ſeventh Century. But the Emperor Leo the Wiſe cauſed her Body to be removed from Epheſus to Conſtantinople, the latter End of the ninth Century, in order to its being interred in the Church erected to the Honour of the Apoſtles.

Thus have I given the fulleſt Account I was able of the Followers of the bleſſed Jeſus; the Perſons who ſpread the Light of the Goſpel over the whole World, removed the Veil of Ignorance and Superſtition drawn over the Kingdoms of the Earth, and taught us the Method of attaining eternal Happineſs in the Courts of the new Jeruſalem. May we all follow their glorious Example; may we imitate their Piety, their Charity, their Love: Then ſhall we paſs through Things temporal in ſuch a Manner, that we ſhall finally gain the Things eternal, and be admitted as worthy Gueſts at the marriage-ſupper of the Lamb.

FINIS.